

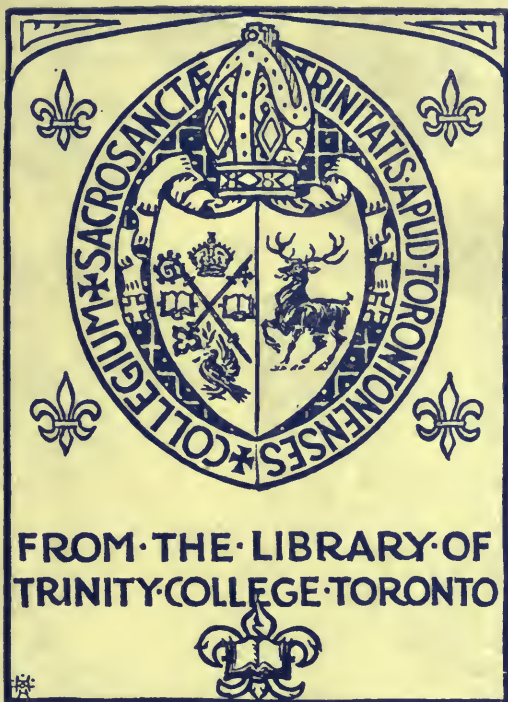
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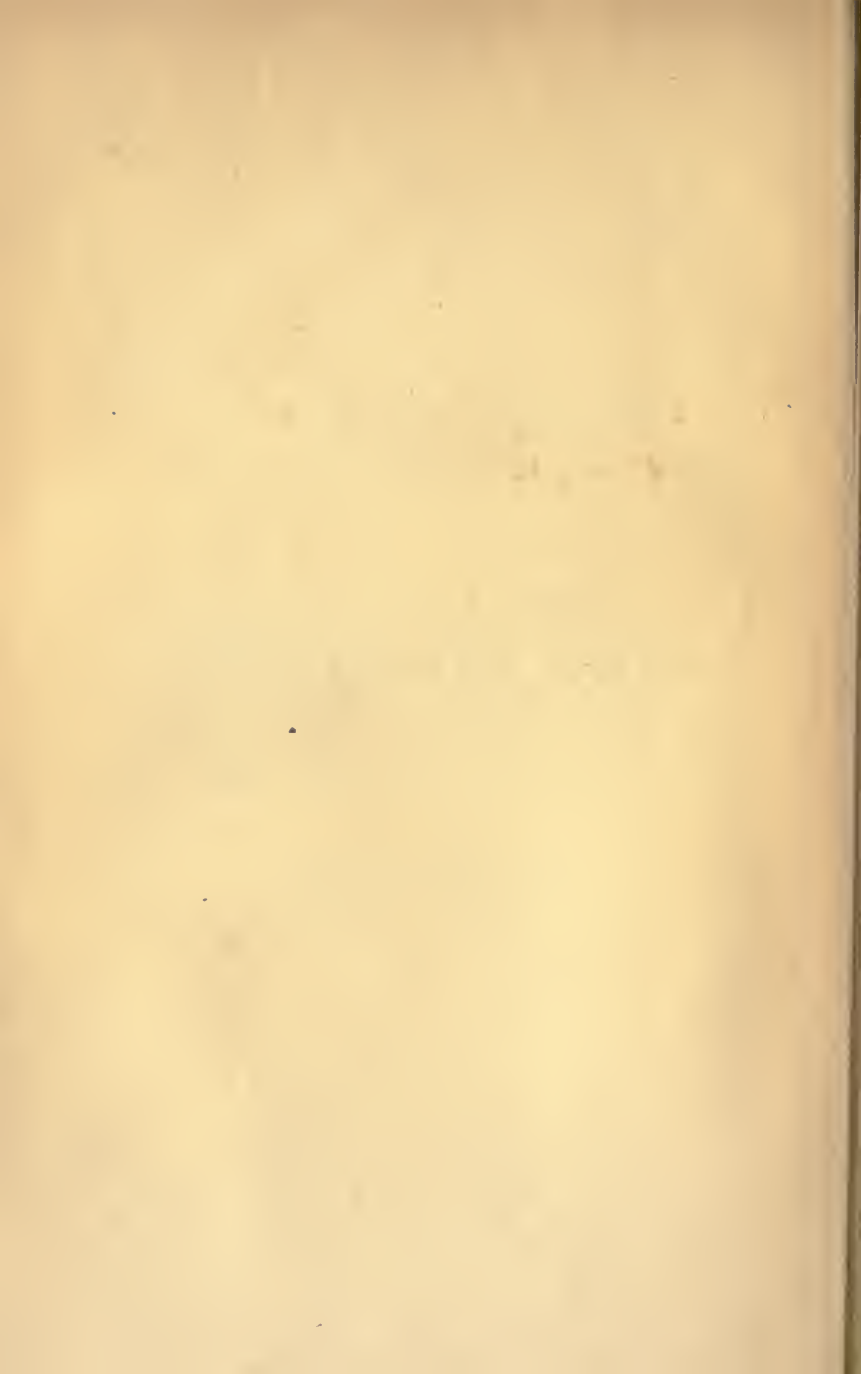
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PLEAS AND CLAIMS



PLEAS AND CLAIMS FOR CHRIST

BY THE REV.

H. S. HOLLAND, M.A.

CANON RESIDENTIARY AND PRECENTOR OF ST. PAUL'S

LONDON

LONGMANS, GREEN, & CO.

AND NEW YORK: 15 EAST 16th STREET

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P R E F A C E

IF it is justifiable to publish sermons at all, it must be right also to leave them in their original character. The following sermons are, therefore, printed as they were preached, at the risk of repetitions, etc., such as are natural to hortatory appeals. It is impossible to revise them by the light of a higher literary standard, without changing their type; and they can only plead for themselves that they counted, at the time, for getting over the obscurities and roughnesses of which they are profoundly conscious, to the preacher's voice and gesture and manner, which would be there to help them through.

The first ten offer Pleas on behalf of the Faith to the mind and imagination; the last nine attempt to assert the Claims of the Creed over the moral and practical life.

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P L E A S .

SERMON I.

FROM FAITH TO FAITH—I.

“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”—ACTS xxvi. 8.

WHY should it? That is the question that haunts us again and again, as our faith—that faith to which we cling as men cling to a rope flung to them from shore amid black swirling waters; that faith which is our only inspiration, our only peace, our only source of hope and power—does, nevertheless, stagger and tremble in face of the sweep of the storm,—does yield and lapse under the daunting pressure of hard, mechanical materialism. As our hearts sink with mistrust, as our souls sicken with doubt, we call as it were to ourselves, call to our drooping spirit, to our timid will, “How is this? Why so lagging, so fearful, so faithless? Why this sudden retreat, this cowardly silence? Why this loosening of hold on the strong hope set before you? O my soul, so weak and dispirited, O my heart, so irresolute and sinking, why, why should you fail me? ‘Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?’”

Why should it? When we press the question home, I think that, with many, it comes to something like this. We feel that at Easter, at Ascension-tide, we are abruptly shot into the midst of a scene which seems to have no intelligible or natural relation to the ordinary scenery within which our normal lives are spent. This round earth, with its steady horizon, with its familiar situation, within the limitation of which we work out our days, seems to be broken off short. This Resurrection, with its mystical appearances, with its closing act of Ascension, is something utterly divided in type and character from the life that we experience, and measure, and touch, and know. The two worlds have no common measure. They cannot blend their lines or harmonize their perspective. We have hitherto moved along this common world of work-a-day fact as through a world that, whatever its surprises, did yet always hang together, was consistent with itself, tallied part to part. Its sequence never failed us, it never displaced our methods of calculation. Wonderful secrets there were that we slowly discovered, and boast of in scientific books. But these have always become part and parcel of the general Whole; they have taken their place; they have settled in amid the rest of the facts; they have established themselves within the system; they have fitted close and fast; they have been assimilated; the same network of orderly law has covered, absorbed, incorporated them.

But all this rounded and complete framework of things, so self-sufficient, so satisfactory, comes, as it seems to us, to a sudden stop at this Christian story. Here we

are brought up short. These facts seem to be roughly thrust in upon the rest, like a fragment of some other world, violently intervening. There are no points of contact, no media of transition from the common run of events to these. They make a breach; they reject assimilation; they fall into no sequence; they build no bridges; they put out no ties or reconciling bonds; they will not fit in; they will not close up; they remain foreign as it were to our natural surroundings, unconformed to our normal environment, at variance with our expectations, our experiences, our predispositions. Beautiful, most beautiful, their pathos, their power! Our imagination is stirred to its depths, our emotion is passionately moved, by the exquisite picture, so old, so dear, so significant. The weeping women creeping to the tomb in the grey cold hour of the first dawn; the voices, the visions; the Voice of all voices that speaks and calls, "Mary!" "Peace be unto you!" "Fear not;" the parting of the walls in the upper chamber; the deep breath that is felt moving in the room; the "Abide with us" at Emmaus; the vision by the lake, "Lovest thou Me?"—all this is vivid as ever. Ah yes! It is not its enthralling beauty that we are doubting. It draws us as of old, as the loveliest poem that human pen has ever written, or that it has entered into the heart of man to conceive. As the purest and loftiest ideal that could ever inspire human conduct, as the deepest insight into the abyss of Divine love which has ever thrilled the human conscience,—as this, it exercises over us all its ancient sway. Never were we more susceptible to

its attraction, more sensitive to its appeal. But it hovers there as a poetic dream; that is our difficulty! It will not take the form and substance of matter-of-fact reality. It will not stand our pressure when we lean upon it. It will not hold us up when we fall. It will not answer when we cry to it for help. And without this, if it fail in this, it is no religion. To be a religion, it must have stuff enough in it to stand firm amid the throng of flesh-and-blood facts; substance enough in it to take its solid and effectual place amid the storm and stress of actual realities. It must be at work as a living force here on this our sturdy earth, in among the other working forces which are touched and felt. It must be able to insert its own will among our wills, to set its own energy against resistant energies. It cannot hang loose and unharmonized, unblended with the daily environment, a strange and remote suggestion of what might be, instead of proving itself a vital factor included within the range of common substantial existence.

No! A religion is bound to blend with actual life; yet this blending is what we fail to achieve. The drama of the Death, Resurrection, Ascension, seems to us to stand abruptly cut off from the realm of real existence, from the light of common day. The contrast between it and the facts about us remains violent and unsolved. Between it and them a great gulf is fixed, and they that would pass from the one to the other cannot do it. No road seems to lead across. Whichever world we take our stand in appears abso-

lutely divorced from the other. If we place ourselves under the dominion of the Christian drama, in church, *e.g.*, or at the Eucharist, or in private prayer, then we find ourselves forced to shut our eyes fast to outward ordinary facts; we must enclose ourselves within the veil of mysticism. And again, if we yield ourselves up to the mastery of common out-of-door life, then we know not how to bring in the Christian scenes. We come up to them with a jar, a shock. We know not where to place them. They appear fantastic and unreal. We recoil in confusion. Is not this the case with hundreds of us? Is not this the secret of our timorous impotence? It is not any positive argument of any particular kind or type which we succumb to or dread. No! But rather this continual breach in the harmony of our spiritual with our secular existence.

And then perhaps we are urged by apologists or preachers. Nay, we are our own apologist, our own preacher. We urge ourselves to accept this violent breach, as inevitable to the nature of a revelation. The supernatural, we say, is bound to stand in abrupt contrast with the natural. It must stand aloof from everyday facts, as a fragment abruptly thrust in amid an alien world. It is an outrage upon it, to try to minimize its speciality. If it be a revelation, there can be no bridge of transition, no lines that blend with common earth, no harmonious junction, no dovetailing, no closing up of gaps, no crossing and mingling of frontiers. This is what we should expect. This is the mystery under which we bow. We

must leave earth behind when we cross over from the natural into the light of the Resurrection. To the natural man, it must be ever thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead.

So, perhaps, we argue with ourselves. And yet we cannot but discover, I fear, that in accepting such a position as this last, though we may be able to tide along, though we may ease the strain, and may, indeed, find a way of partial peace for our own souls, yet we do not become strong, robust Christians; we do not feel the victory of faith. It is a weak and timid belief that we arrive at, at the best. We still have to be very cautious and tentative in bringing our religion to bear upon daily matters, or in introducing it into the thick of ordinary motives and matters in our talk. It shrinks from the contact with the rough-and-ready tumble of affairs. It is a mystery—reserved, solitary, hidden. We ourselves are conscious of the lack of continuity between our commonplace experiences and our spiritual conscience. We are broken in half, and the halves work and move in separate places. We cannot be very effective believers. And this again distresses and perplexes us.

Now, whatever be the nature or degree of the truth that is conveyed by the statement that a revelation must be a mystery, it is well worth our while to notice that this divorce between the facts of revelation and the natural universe of things is wholly contrary to the mind of St. Paul. He never dreams of presenting to faith the events of the Incarnation and Resurrection as if they constituted a violent, defiant fragment, -

tossed out into the midst of a condition of things with which they stood in abrupt contrast—cut off, isolated, irreconcilable. To him the Christ, the risen Christ, appears as the very Corner-stone of the fabric of Nature. Far from being an isolated and startling surprise, visionary and poetic, the Resurrection is the solid central core and substance of created existence. There is nothing to which it has not intimate relations—nothing with which it is not in vital contact. Far from breaking in upon a world otherwise orderly, sequent, and rounded, it was just this secular world of ours which appeared by itself to St. Paul to be so unintelligible and disjointed. Before Christ rose from the dead, the daily facts of human existence were to him fragmentary, broken, abrupt, unreconciled, without unity or method. Now in Him it is that, for the first time, they win a harmony, they fall into line; they become consistent, continuous, compact. It seemed to St. Paul as if the sun had risen upon the earth. Before it—before the Resurrection—the world of things lay about men as in the dark; they stumbled blindly against dim obstacles; they started at cumbrous and shadowy masses which loomed about their path, menacing and ominous. Before them the distance lay vague, featureless, slumbrous. They groped along through a chaos of unsorted shapes. But now, as the Christ rose, as the Dayspring leapt up into the sky, it spread out its luminous significance over the whole wide surface of things. Everything caught its interpretative light. It penetrated every degree of life; it flooded all dark places. Everything

sprang together into an integral whole; everything dropped into position. The near showed itself to be near; the far was known to be far. Grade upon grade, rank upon rank, the entire order of existences shaped themselves by this new standard. Colours came upon the face of the earth; each object was distinct, and yet each was grouped and connected. The mind ranged over all, satiated and reconciled. It was in possession of the secret; wherever its powers and gifts allowed it to reach, there this one sufficing interpretation held good.

We know well how St. Paul has heaped word upon word to convey to us this luminous centrality of the Resurrection through the opening chapters of those wonderful Epistles which we have been reading in the order of Lessons—Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. He spends his utmost strength in emphasizing and reiterating the far-reaching universality of this mystery now laid open; the robustness of its solid reality. Far back it goes to the very roots of the first creation. The purpose, which now fulfilled itself in raising Christ from the dead, was an eternal purpose which underlay the primal acts by which God called the world into being. “Before the foundation of the world!” he keeps saying to them. So deep down ran the great Counsel, the Predestinating Will, which now stood disclosed. There, where God, in the darkest recesses, worked in the seething mists of heat out of which the earth grew together into its earliest consistency—even there, in the beginning of beginnings, He looked forward to the new dawn of Easter Day. He laid His plan, He

framed His fabric, that it might be fit at last to become the vessel of His Word, the Material of the Resurrection. There, before the origin of human life, He so worked that at last this material mechanism, moving forward grade by grade, might lend itself to be the Vehicle, the Body, of Him Whom He should raise from the dead. He so worked that, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ;" predestinating all according to the purpose of this His good pleasure, Who worketh after the counsel of His own Will.

So deep lay its significance; and, then, so wide! The Resurrection collected into itself the entire course of man's development. All this long story, otherwise such a bewildering tangle, fell into its place, gained intelligible meaning, when once it was seen to serve this final issue. Tendencies, otherwise confused and dark, now revealed their force. Directions that seemed blind were now justified. The main momentum that carried along the forces of human history, received its sanction. The lines of growth, the complex arrangement of the faculties, the organization of the soul,—all passed into the light, all touched their fulfilment. "The mystery" kept so dark through all these long weary ages, and now at last disclosed, covered every nook and corner, not only of the Jewish dispensation, but of that strange discipline through which the Gentile population had dimly stumbled forward toward the unknown goal. All their dark lot was clear now. All was leading to this; all was drawn, by the good pleasure of God's Will, into conformity

with the purpose which abounded in such large wisdom, in such wide foresight!

So deep, so wide, so long; and so high! As St. Paul's eyes followed up the risen Saviour, not only did all earth's past story lie summed up and satisfied in his sight, but chamber after chamber of heaven yielded its secret up at the entrance of this glory. All were summed, gathered up in Him—things in heaven as well as in earth. He, in His risen Body, passed up and up, and still no height was touched of which He was not the Fulfilment. All fell under His interpretation; all found their place in Him. Right up to the very summit, to the very throne of thrones, He still passed, and lo! the entire world of life held itself together in Him, knit itself up into Him, by cords and bands, into one articulated scheme and into one organic Body. "Yea, for by Him were all things created," he tells the Colossians, "that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."

So he looks. So he embraces the great vision of the mystery. And again and again he summons his hearers to enlarge their intellectual horizons, to strain their mental powers, to put out effort, to expand under the inflowing gift of the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, so that they might grasp the new secret in all its length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and might enter into the eternal counsels, and measure

something of the exceeding greatness of God's power, when He raised up Christ from the dead, and set Him at His right hand far above all principalities and powers, "that at the Name of Jesus"—the exalted Name of Him Who humbled Himself to the shame of the Cross—"every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth."

That is St. Paul's theology. He saw no breach of continuity anywhere. The very act of the Resurrection, which constitutes Christ the Head of the Church, reveals also, at the same moment, the eternal relation in which He stands to the world of experience, to the natural creation. And reversely, the same principles, laws, methods, and motives which make Christ the underlying secret and interpretation and goal of all nature and history, culminate in their natural and spontaneous climax when He is shown as the Firstborn from the dead. All hangs together from first to last in the Head of the new creation. As "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist," so it follows, in orderly and inevitable sequence, to the illuminated intelligence, that scans the graduated scale of life—"that He is the Head of the Body, the Church."

My brethren, this Pauline theology throws us back behind the question with which we began. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" So we inquired, and we found ourselves answering, "Because it is at variance with all natural experience; because it breaks in as an abrupt and disjointed fact, refusing to harmonize with the rest

of life; because it hangs there idly isolated, defiantly shattering the continuity, the orderliness of existence."

Well, but now we see that this answer answers nothing. It only carries the original question one step further back. Why is it that the Resurrection should so seem to us to be at variance with the natural existence? That is the whole point. Why does it stand aloof, a defiant fragment, unreconciled, inharmonious, disrupt? No doubt, if it is that, it would be incredible; for it would be unlike all we know, or believe, of God. But that is just the antithesis of what it was to St. Paul. He found it credible, just because it fitted so close and fast into the whole sum of natural things—close and fast, as the very key-stone of an arch that is slid in, and at once every stone that rises to meet it on either side of the curve feels the happy pressure that fixes it in its place. It was credible because all the sum of things grew in it continuous, and entire, and compact, and intelligible, and harmonious.

Here, then, is our real difference from St. Paul; and the question of questions for all who find the Resurrection incredible is, "Why is my daily common experience so different from St. Paul's? Human life, its facts, its issues,—why are they such that they receive no illumination from the Resurrection? Why will they not cohere with it? Why do they stand aloof from it?"

Ah! *why* is it? Why is our survey of this earthly life of ours such that we see no way of admitting into consistency with its sum of facts the resurrection

from the dead? Its assumptions, its judgments—what is there in them of a spiritual character? Are they not all steeped through and through in mere secularity? Let us stop and think. How much do we reckon on God as an active Factor in daily secular things? Do we, by instinct, trace Him anywhere? Do we spontaneously recognize Him? As we talk about men and their doings; as we calculate what may happen to us or to others, in the thick of business concerns, in the heat of a discussion, how often does He appear? Is He there at all? Might He not be just as well non-existent? Think over it. What is the matter with our experience? We see the same earth and sky and sun as St. Paul saw. We are men as he was, “of like feelings and passions.” Why do our calculations, based on the same figures as his, land us in such a different result, so that we repel what he welcomed, and recoil when he ran forward? Why is it?

That, then, is the question we preachers would put to you. We do not say to you, “Leave behind you your natural experience; throw aside your habitual calculations. So only can you believe what is now so incredible to you—that God should raise the dead!” No! but we say, *If* you find this thing incredible, if you find it jar upon all your instinctive anticipations, then the first thing to do is to go back upon those experiences of yours. Revise your anticipations, reconsider your calculations. Why are they jarred? Why are they upset? There it is that the flaw lies.

Oh, as we so look back, as we review and reconsider the character of our ordinary everyday mind, do we not know too well what I mean? Are we not startled to find how, by insensible degrees, our common daily life has got emptied of God, and of His Spirit? Are we not distressed at the artificial effort which it costs us to admit spiritual forces within the reckonings made by our practical common sense? What has happened to our daily judgment? Does it ever naturally detect, and assume, the energetic personal Presence of God in amid the run of affairs, in amid the life of nature? And if not, why not?

That is the challenge that St. Paul would surely put to us. Why is it a thing incredible to you that God should be found, and heard of, and seen, mixing actively with your concerns? Why is it that you never allow for this, that you forget it, and are surprised at recalling it? Why is it that you have somehow dropped all this out, and do not quite know what to make of it when you remind yourself of it? Why is it? Press the question home; carry it about with you; let it ring in your ears; let it haunt your memory; let it refuse to be dislodged; let it follow you home from this church—to your house, to your room, to your bed. Why is it? For, of course, if it is so, if you have learned insensibly to omit from your reckonings all the lesser and more usual activities of God; if you make up your daily accounts without Him;—then you have answered your own question, you have discovered why it is that you recoil at being brought face to face with the mighty

working of His energy, by which He raised Jesus Christ from the dead. How, indeed, could it be otherwise? You have omitted all that could prepare you for the event. You have already made it incredible that God should appear on the scene at all. You have brought yourself under the doom of that terrible law which our Lord Himself declared in the words, "If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

SERMON II.

FROM FAITH TO FAITH—II.

“*Ye believe in God; believe also in Me.*”—ST. JOHN xiv. 1.

THE drama of Easter, with its imperative demands, with its emphatic witness to the energetic working of God's present power here on earth, naturally startles us as its light breaks in, with sudden vehemence, upon our shadowed paths and dusky habits. Many are apt to recoil in bewilderment. And that bewilderment, that recoil, they lay to the count of this event which has so startled them. They charge it, naturally enough, upon this Resurrection, which the Creed so loudly proclaims. And yet the true secret of the recoil lies, as we would plead, further back. This recoil is a revelation to us of the nature of the life that we had been quietly leading before we faced the abrupt fact of the Resurrection. This Easter sun throws a strong light back upon the road by which we had been travelling towards it through the dim night. The Voice that speaks through that risen Saviour seems to say, “Look back; look where you stand. Look at the path that your feet have unwittingly been treading. You start at My loud cry to you. Yes, it is well for you to start. You were stepping down

and down on to lower and lower levels; you were nearing the dangerous swamps, where there would be no more footing; and yet you never noticed, you never took alarm; you were stupid with slow and creeping sleep; you were losing all sensitive response to the touch of higher things. Therefore it is that you do right to be surprised. This start is the measure of the distance to which you have slipped from the right way. If you had been stepping along the path where I bade you walk, you would have moved out into the glory of this Easter dawn without a quiver of recoil, without a touch of disturbance. All would have been to you as simple, as natural, as spontaneous, as inevitable, as it was to her who found Some One standing there, in the stillness of the morning, close at her side, at Whose felt presence all wonder, all bewilderment, all disturbance, yielded and broke and ceased, as the quiet familiar Voice called her by her name, and she turned and said, ‘Rabboni!’”

There is, indeed, a path prepared for us by God the Father, by which to arrive at the Resurrection without any shock or jar—the path of belief in Himself. That path God Himself has laboured to set in order, to direct, shape, fit, smooth. Ever His voice has been behind us, saying, “This is the way; walk ye in it.” This is the way along which His Christ is to come, on which He will be met and welcomed. Every obstacle has been cleared which could choke or obscure that path. Every fence and hedge that could guard it has been built. God Himself has busied Himself, century after century, in making the path ready, so

that His Son, when He comes, should find His own with ease and security, and be found of them. Walking along that prepared path, you and I might greet the great news of the Resurrection with that same simplicity with which we are told, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." Simple, smooth, and clear and instantaneous, the transition would effect itself. "Believing in God," it would inevitably follow that we should "believe also in Jesus Christ."

The recoil, then, is a signal that we are off the path. It bids us review, reconsider, our normal ways. How have we got on to a track that does not take the direction of the Resurrection, that does not land us at the open tomb? The Resurrection, according to St. Paul, according to the Bible, is an event long anticipated, foreseen, prepared for—an event which ought to enter as the absolute term and culmination of all natural endeavour and experience. Why does it not do so? Easter rightly forces us back upon this question. It not only lifts our eyes to heavenly places, but also turns them back on the past. It bids us ask ourselves, "What is the world in which I habitually live? What is its character? Is it a world which admits of Easter? Has it that in it to which Easter responds? Is it a world, a life, which would need Easter if Easter were a fact? Or is it such—are its motions, motives, associations, hopes, expectations such—that Easter is simply *not* wanted?"

And, my brethren, I cannot but think that any man or woman, who lives in the thick of modern thought

and feeling, must know well enough how deep and how real and how stern such a question becomes. For the world into which Easter can enter must be a world already open to God to act in—a world committed already to God, in which it will be no surprise that God should be found moving and working. And yet every one of us knows the enormous weight of the forces which are working upon us at this moment to make our public and common lives practically and insensibly godless. Godless—not in some formal and conscious way. I am not speaking of those who have adopted an intellectual atheism of any shade or shape. I speak of the general mass of folk, travelling along the main highways of a Christian civilization, not severing themselves in any distinct fashion from the religious throngs, not dreaming that they have positively dropped out of the Christian ranks. I speak, in fact, of all of us, except those few who have become distinctly conscious of the danger of this environing godlessness, and have taken definite steps to counteract it.

For, indeed, the danger is inevitable. It belongs to our modern modes of thought, of action. It is inherent in the very nature of our success in civilization. It is bound to tell upon us with terrible persistence, unless it is recognized and discounted.

For our civilization, in all its modern development, rests on what we may call, broadly, the scientific spirit—the scientific habit of mind. And what does this mean? It means the capacity to separate off, for practical and theoretical purposes, the secular from the spiritual interests of mankind; the capacity to

study the chain of effects in all their complicated relations apart from their cause; the capacity to limit our considerations and calculations to that subordinate sphere in which the problem of their relation to God can afford to be omitted. Now, do not let us make a mistake here. In saying this, we are not making any charge against science, as if it were "godless" in itself, or as if it were omitting God as a working Factor where it ought to include Him. Far from it! As science, it cannot but do what it is doing. It cannot help itself; it is bound by its duty to itself, by its loyalty to its task, to confine itself to those exact limitations of which we are speaking. Science is, and rightly is, a study of phenomena, of effects, of what we call "secondary causes," which means causes so called by courtesy, which are in no real sense causes at all. Science is bound to confine itself to the process—the sequences—which pass before its observation. It can have nothing to do directly with the origin of the process, with the real causal Force which creates the sequences. It treats of "what is;" it has nothing to do with the "how" and the "why." It is content to accept the twin final facts. "Here is a world; and I can observe it." It has nothing to say, it can have nothing to say, if you ask it, "How is it that a world is there? and how is it possible for me to observe it?" It can never attempt to meet those questions without making itself absurd. It ought to pass them by with as much indifference as Dr. Johnson did, or as any practical man of experience does. That is its only safe course; it has a perfect right to take it.

It was just the discovery that this severance was possible which divided the modern from the mediæval world. Modern science began its victorious career from the hour when it discovered, through Bacon and his followers, that it could afford to leave these questions aside, and could go ahead on its own account without entangling itself in philosophic puzzles. It could limit itself to the process, the growth, of things; it could observe and relate, and compare, the facts, without going behind and beyond what it saw and felt, just as easily and successfully as the practical man does. It might have no philosophy of causes to give at all, as Hume showed it that it had none, and yet gaily rest its triumphant progress on this very teaching of Hume, as it does even to-day. Before, in mediæval schools, it had been so hampered just because so few could distinguish between what was metaphysical and what was scientific; but now the distinction was seen. Science was not metaphysical; it was not a philosophy of causes; it had a separate field of its own. Slowly the discovery of this distinction became clear; and the clearer it became, the more brilliant was the advance of science.

Forgive me this long explanation. It was necessary, in order to clear up what we mean.

Science, we say, is bound to omit the problems of origin and cause, and to confine itself to the mechanism and movement of things as they appear. Well, that means—science has to omit the relation of things to God, their First, their Eternal, their Final Cause. It omits it because it is not its proper concern. It is

not its vice, but its virtue, that it should make the omission; it can only confuse itself, and everybody else, by attempting a task inherently and necessarily beyond its powers.

The great scientific men of to-day know this, and they allow for it. They recognize that, in order to deal with the existence of God, they must turn to other fields of knowledge, to other faculties of thought, to other methods of reasoning. They may differ and discuss as to the existence of such faculties or methods in man. But they see clearly enough that if they deny their existence, if man has no higher faculties than those which he puts out in physical existence, then he is barred from knowing God. Therefore these men who so think call themselves "Agnostics." Man, they mean, being confined to scientific knowledge as his highest instrument, cannot know God. He must omit God as a known and intelligible Factor.

And this argument, of course, applies to all forms of real cause—to all that is spiritual. Science must omit it, not only in its highest form, the Personal Will of God, but in all its lower forms, the personal wills of men, which are made in the image of God. Science has no means of taking Will, at any stage, within its horizons. It can only deal with the effects of Will. If it is agnostic with respect to God, it must be agnostic in respect of the personal self of man. It must omit will, character, personality, from its calculations. So far as it itself goes, it must be agnostic.

And, my brethren, believe me, this affects you and

me and all of us quite as much as those who definitely call themselves by this title, and in a more dangerous way; for they, at least, know what they are; but we become practical agnostics without recognizing it. We who are not scientific thinkers at all, but ordinary men and women, grow accustomed to having everything put before us in the manner appropriate to science. Science is the dominant and the exciting power of to-day. It fascinates us all; it draws us all into its net. It is always astonishing us with something strange and novel. It lets us into such delicate secrets of mechanism; it delights us with the minute intricacy of exquisite details, or with the remote magnificence of infinite distances. It seems to us the very model of all knowledge. Its methods, its rules, its way of putting things, spread everywhere. Nothing can commend itself to us unless it is thrown into a scientific form, or talks scientific language. The reviews, the newspapers, all the organs that are bound to look as if they are up to date, drape everything in the scientific dress. If the scientific watchword is "evolution," then everything must be treated under terms of evolution. Our novels must be analytical, our histories are bound to speak of nothing but development and survival and environment. This all becomes so habitual, so instinctive, that it permeates our entire intelligence and imagination, and spreads over every domain of knowledge.

It is almost impossible for us to measure how deep and far this habit reaches. Do we notice how that we never seem happy and content about a fact until

we have been given some mechanical reason for it, until it has been traced to the motive of the circumstances, to the predisposing conditions? And when once we have reached some such reason as that, do we note how we rest satisfied at once, as if the whole matter were explained? For instance, if we are reading of some great historic character, we are so interested and pleased if his greatness can be shown to be the product of the encompassing situation. We are bothered and perplexed by such elements in his character as remain over and above what his environment can decently account for.

Take, again, the familiar instance of political economy. Here is a study of mankind which, in its earlier phases, when it was still claiming to be a science, omitted the personal element; omitted the vital element, the most essential factor in the living men and women with which it dealt. It showed them as blind tools in the sway of general law, the creatures of their circumstances. So far as they were this—and all of us are to a certain varying degree—its generalizations were correct. But the odd thing was, that we were quite satisfied with this limited and partial explanation. It was thrown into the proper scientific form, and therefore it was genially accepted by us as adequate and clear. We actually fancied that we could explain the actions of living men and women without allowing anything at all for their personal and moral characters. So curious was the sway of science over our imagination! So habituated had we become to thinking it can explain everything!

Do not, then, let any one say that I am talking about something which concerns only the few. Believe me, this habit of thinking about things, which is natural to science, is all but universal. We ordinary men and women, who have nothing to do with scientific speculations, do nevertheless grow up in it; we fall in with it; we never take up a book or newspaper without yielding ourselves to its spell. It is on us like the pressure of the atmosphere. It moulds and moves and directs us. It is inbred in all of us, until it has become an instinctive mental habit.

And therefore it is that we habitually live in a world from out of which God, and the things of God, have insensibly been omitted; we have become agnostic without meaning or recognizing it. And it is just with us unscientific people that this omission of God becomes so spiritually disastrous. Within the strict limits of scientific thinking and method, the omission is perfectly legitimate and expedient. It is done for a distinct purpose, and that purpose demands it. But you and I, so far as we fall under this scientific habit, carry on this omission of God outside the realm of science. We do it in our practical and moral handling of the living world of men. We do it in our active concerns with the living men about us. We slip into the scientific way of talking of them, in discussing them and their affairs, in calculating probabilities, in considering political and social problems. We are always treating men as if they were the creatures of general laws, of mechanical motives, and could be summed up in statistics, and were the prey and puppets

of environing conditions. All this they may be to a certain degree, but only to a certain degree; they are, also, much more than this. They are individual personal beings, with living moral characters, with creative wills. And so far as they are this, they are not accounted for in statistics; they are not subject to mechanical necessities; they are not the creatures of circumstances. Yet we go on placidly ignoring this difference. We make our calculations just as if it did not exist; and when some vigorous or violent exercise of this vital personal power in man upsets all our statistical reckonings, as in some moral reaction or spiritual revolution, we are startled—we recoil. We had not allowed for this. We greet it with something of the bewildered surprise with which we treat it as incredible that God should raise the dead!

How can we bring ourselves to book about this matter? How can we prove to ourselves how godless our general survey of life is apt to be; how agnostic we all instinctively are? Can we not do it in this way? Let us ask ourselves whether we do not leave *our own inner* experiences behind us, whenever we are interpreting the human life outside us.

For instance, we never suffer *our own* practical life to be confused or terrified by statistics. Inside ourselves, where we know our spiritual character, we laugh at them. We do not ever think that we shall somehow be driven to commit suicide or murder, because a certain number of men are sure to do it in the year. We feel that this has no bearing whatever upon our moral responsibilities, and rather per-

plexes us than helps us to explain anything. Yet somehow, about other men in the mass, statistics seem so satisfactory, and to explain so much. They seem to us more than mere records: they wear the garb of laws, under which the actions they record can be brought; and, as laws, they half suggest that the actions are necessary, and justified. We cease to be horrified at murders or suicides so long as they keep within the average; they seem to be accounted for. We faintly pity the poor guilty ones, as if they had acted under a fate that compelled the average to be sustained. Now, why this difference between ourselves and others? Why does the statistical record seem somehow to interpret and justify their actions, and yet to lie wholly outside, do nothing on behalf of, our own?

Or, prayer. Most of us do rely on the efficacy of prayer in our own private life and affairs. We do so easily, naturally, deeply. We feel—we know—that it will make a difference how we shall act and speak and think if we have prayed. We could not bear to enter on a difficulty or a peril without appealing to the power of prayer, without evoking the direct activity of God. Now, this real prayerful life can go on within our souls with the profoundest sincerity; and yet we may fail to transfer it from the hidden world within us to the real world without. Out in that active, thronging life of busy men, so solid and so visible, we assume every agency to be at work except that of prayer, and of the power which prayer evokes. Who does not know it—the sudden rebuff when, in considering the probabilities of an epidemic, or the

fortunes of a lawsuit, or the decisions of European diplomatists, some one makes a reference to the working of prayer? We do not say anything; we do not dispute it; we know it ought to be true and real. But why this drop? Why this lapse of keen response in us to the suggestion, this recoil into the decency of silence, this quick dart of self-questioning? "Do I believe that? Do I really look for anything from prayer in a matter like this? Is it more to me than a religious formula?" So the swift throbbing questions start and stab within us. Yet why—why should they? If it was our own case, we should have no such tormenting hesitations. If it was our own lawsuit, on which our own personal fortunes greatly hung, where much obviously would depend on our own moral nerve and steadiness under cross-examination, or on the patience, or skill, or temper of counsel and judges, we should find no difficulty at all in praying beforehand with all our hearts that the affair might be guided to a just issue. Instinctively, freely, earnestly, we should fall on our knees, on the morning when the anxiety of the decision pressed hardest and sucked at our spirits; we should kneel and bury our head in our hands, and offer to God Almighty our whole will and heart and mind, and implore Him to be near with His succour, that all engaged might do their part with honourable honesty and courage. Why smile, why wonder, why be bothered when it is other people's law affairs? Why about them should prayer seem so futile and remote a weapon?

If a disease smites us, or those dearest to us; if the

doctors are met, in the other room over there, in consultation, and if we are waiting, sick with dread suspense, hardly knowing whether to fear most that the consultation should prolong this terrible agony of ignorance, or that it should end, and the door be opened, and we be called upon to know the decision; if, at such an hour, we, with ready spontaneity, busy ourselves in prayer, and feel all its immense significance, and find it absolutely natural to throw ourselves out upon God's great goodness with fervent beseechings for guidance and help, that those doctors may be directed to the right conclusion, that the sickness may be stayed;—if we do this with unwavering confidence, under the stir and stress of the personal crisis, why is it so utterly different with us when we are hearing or reading of an epidemic that is abroad, or of the wards of our hospitals with their multitudinous horrors? Why do we then fly timidly from every reference to the efficacy of prayer, and cling fast to purely medical language, and feel never safe unless we are treating the matter from the physical point of view solely, and would rather not touch on any causes of the disease, or of the succours to meet it, that were not purely mechanical and material? Why is our mood so changed? Why has prayer and its possibilities vanished wholly out of the scene? Why this violent contrast between our private and our public mind? We believe that prayer might do well enough in our own case; we turn to it as a real force. Why is it not the same when we are looking abroad over the affairs of men?

Dear brethren, I cannot but think that it is the practical godlessness of all the generalizations under which we review public life which is surely the reason. Though, for our own part, we "believe in God," we dare not transplant or enlarge our inner belief so as to cover the wide field outside. We nurse it to ourselves. We let it be driven back, and terrified, by the scientific habits of mind which have laid hands upon that out-of-door world. There, we and others have got used to formulæ which omit God, and the soul, and prayer, and Spirit from their accounts. And we are ashamed to use any other formula but these, which are popular and common and easy and familiar. These formulæ we should throw over in a moment if they attempted to dictate to our own inner habits of life. We should repudiate them wholly, with a hearty laugh at their absurdity, if they attempted to order us about. But we have not the spiritual courage to assert about the world outside that which we know to be true or real within. We shrink from interpreting other men's lives according to the measure of our own spiritual experiences. And if we do this in the simplest matters, such as prayer, if we practically drop out of our review the very groundwork of all possible activity of God amid the real affairs of men, then how can we wonder that we recoil from the highest witness of that present and energetic activity—the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead?

"Believe in God!" That is our Lord's first precept, if we would believe in Him and His Resurrection. All faith in Him must base itself on this

fundamental factor—belief in the Father, belief in God.

“Believe in God!” Start there; that is the only way. And “believe in God,” not only in the hidden recesses of the spirit, but in your practical, everyday working life in the world. Scan the world with the eyes of one who believes that God is in it, that God is to be seen and heard there. Spread out this timid, shrinking, nervous faith that lurks there in your secret soul, cringing and shadowy. Carry out into the interpretation of life that which is your own conviction. If you believe in God for yourself, believe in God for others. If He be real and active within you, then have faith enough to ascribe to Him that same reality and activity without. If the mechanical scientific modes of classification fail hopelessly to cover your own existence, and to account for your own energies, then be equally certain that they cannot cover or account for the energies and the existences of any other man.

“Believe in God” as you look out at life. That is so different from our private belief in Him; so much harder. We can experiment in this; we can put ourselves to proof, so as to win a fuller courage. At some moment in church, when we ourselves have been earnestly praying, we can look up and turn our eyes to watch another man at his prayers, as he kneels in church, as he sings; we can quietly think it over, in cold blood, as a spectator, and say, “Look, that man is speaking into the ears of a living God! Those lips of his, as they move, are actually con-

veying to a present God what it is he desires. God is there with him in this place, and is moved by what He hears, and is acting back again in answer. God and the soul! Look at them there, actually communing together, before my eyes!"—how we quake, how we start! Our usual apparatus for taking in the visible world has not allowed for this. It seems like a dream, a fancy! Yet it is no dream, no fancy at all, when we do it ourselves. No, indeed! the act is as natural, as secure, as reliable, as any in our own experience. Oh, lay hold of that belief! And if you do believe it, if you do know it with all the intense conviction of a lifelong verity, then believe it wholly, and believe it everywhere. Give it objective worth. Throw yourself out upon faith in it, in estimating the life of this great round earth. Believe it, that the Father is there; that the world is full of His energy, His breath. Appeal to this great under-world of living spirit, and then you will have got to the roots of that faith which, by believing in God, cannot but go on to believe in Jesus Christ Whom He raised from the dead.

SERMON III.

FROM FAITH TO FAITH—III.

“Have faith in God.”—ST. MARK xi. 22.

POPULARLY, broadly speaking, there are two worlds that, for each one of us, stand over against one another.

(1) The world outside us, of men and things, which we find ourselves observing as spectators, noting and examining and learning; of which we ourselves are only an accidental part. (2) The world inside us, which we feel as our own, which we know all about, which exists in and for us, which we in some measure create for ourselves, from which we are inseparable.

Now, which of these two is to be our mainstay, our pivot? On occasions when the two seem to clash, which of them is it that we mean to stand by? Which of the two shall we make our starting-point for interpreting the other? Of which of them have we surest knowledge and certainty? That is the question of questions. For this alternative cannot be shunted, as in our idler hours we imagine. It cannot be that they can remain apart, unrelated, unreconciled. They overlap too much for this severance to be sustained. If we try to live our hidden life of spirit on wholly different lines from our out-

ward secular life in the world, we shall find ourselves tangled in the old dilemma put by our Lord. We cannot belong to two masters, to two worlds. We must insensibly incline to the one side or the other. And as we incline to the one, we withdraw from the other; one or other will work its way over us with supremacy. No! the two are there, and one or the other must be primary, must be dominant; one or the other must be the measure by which all must be tested—the reality to which everything must, at a pinch, yield. One must be certainly above, and the other below. But which? This is the question that man must face. And on the one side are ranged all that swaying mass of forces which are making for the secularization of human life. These demand its secularization, because they have made up their minds that the world outside is the true starting-point, the real determinant. That world—the external world of men and things, as we roughly call it—is noted, classified, generalized, quite rightly, according to proper scientific methods; all its romance is brought under the head of laws. And, this done, these methods, these laws, are accepted as the standard of all real knowledge, and then are brought to bear upon that world within the soul, which is each man's secret. Here they clash against strange and unexampled experiences. Motions of will, a sense of freedom, spiritual acts, beliefs, ideals, affections, artistic dreams,—what are all these? These have no counterpart at all in the world outside us; these cannot be observed. They are not "facts;" they cannot be presented for inspection. No scientific methods can

admit them within their ruling. What is to be done? No doubt, there is one way that will, at least, preserve our consistency ; we can deny them. We can say, " This sense of freedom is a delusion ; this act of will is imaginary ; it is the result of fixed and necessary conditions, it is the product of a law unknown to the agent. Poetry, art, beliefs, ideals, even affections, are all emotional reflections of physical movements ; an index of what is going on below the surface ; hereditary inclinations which have forgotten their real origin ; unreal, unsubstantial, imaginative results of a law of association, which is their true physical basis." Or, again, we can deny our capacity to know what they are. " True, there is here something strange, something unprecedented ; here are phenomena which elude our tests. They belong to a world of which we have no actual knowledge. Wherever they begin, exact knowledge ends. About all these matters we must confess ourselves agnostic."

That is the position ; starting from the outside world, it lands us in agnosticism, in confessed ignorance of the inner world. But, my brethren, we who profess to believe in God and the soul, are in the opposite camp. We say that, at all costs, we must start from the inner world ; that is the world for the reality of which we stake our lives. To hold to its reality is our primal, our ineradicable necessity. And this necessity is on us, not through blind and wilful egotism, not through mere instinctive caprice, but on the very strongest grounds that reason can give us. For this inner world—this world of feeling, of will,

of love, of hope, of religion—is one of which we are not outside spectators merely, as we are of that vast sum of things on which we gaze as it rolls past us. It is that outer world which is, indeed, a world of appearances outside the direct control of our critical faculties; but this inner world is no mysterious, unknown, untravelled land. No; it is a life of which we are ourselves part and parcel. We are inside it. We are ourselves within the secret sources whence it springs into being. We see and know how it is done, how it is brought about. We are ourselves concerned with its working, its mechanism. We are fellow-labourers, in our degree, with God in its building. Our will puts out its own little measure of force into the acts that occur; when the effect follows, we know to that extent, at least, the causal force by which it is brought to pass. Our impulses, our affections, our energies, went out into the work, and we, therefore, must know something of how it has all happened. We work the machinery. We know ourselves; we know what we mean when we act; we know why or wherefore it all was. We are behind the scenes; we are in the secret. We cannot be mistaken. This inner world is the one world that we, on all reasonable grounds, must certainly understand. To tell us that we are agnostic here; that we are ignorant of what we mean, *e.g.*, by an act of will; that we are shut off, by our intellectual conditions, from ever having intelligible knowledge of our own selves;—why, this is midsummer madness! This is to deny our own wits. It is to ask us to repudiate the one thing that we do know with

the highest certainty—our own existence. And it is to ask us to do it on the ground of a knowledge which confessedly starts from a world outside us, of which we can only slowly and partially and indirectly collect the meaning; a knowledge which professes itself ignorant of all the real causes by which that world exists, of all the actual motive powers by which it is worked. Such a demand stultifies itself. It asks us to surrender what we know best at the dictation of that about which we know least. We know infinitely better what we mean by “myself,” by “I am,” “I will,” “I love,” than we ever can possibly know what we mean by “laws of nature.” Nay! it is *because* I can be sure of my own personal existence that I also can certify that I see a world outside.

This is an old philosophical quarrel, of course, this quarrel between the scientists and the metaphysicians. But, my brethren, without being philosophers, at any rate, we religious folk must be so far as this on the side of the metaphysicians. We, like them, must assert that the inner world is our primary fact. Religion must assume, from the very start, the reality of the inner world, the reality of the personal self, the reality of its proper freedom, the reality of its moral responsibility, the reality of its personal acts, the reality of its motions of will, the reality of its spiritual aspirations, of its communion with God, of its understanding what that communion means. Religion, that is, must assume the vital reality of that world which, to all scientific methods which start from the other side, must appear as a doubtful and impenetrable mystery. So far, at least, we and the metaphysicians go together. We

both declare that we stand at all costs by the inner world, and that it is from the reality of that known, intelligible inner world, that we must start out in our attempts to bring within the range of our knowledge that outer and more distant world which experience and science disclose to us. Here, in this inner world that we cover and handle, must lie the standard and tests of real existence and real knowledge.

And though the companionship of metaphysicians is apt to make us nervous and alarmed, though they are not easy or soothing folk to live with, and give us troubles and anxieties of their own, yet this much strength and comfort we can all take from them. Whatever their particular scheme may be, they one and all make assertions from which the natural experience, at first sight, recoils at least as violently as it does from the declarations of religion. We are startled and bewildered, we allow, when we quietly think over what is meant by prayer; what is involved in believing that God acts, here and now, in the world about us; that He comes to us in bread and wine; that He raises His Son from the dead. Well, but we cannot be more startled and bewildered than we are when first we listen to the principles of a metaphysical idealist. So strange, so inconceivable, so unlike all that we expected, so fantastic and impossible it all sounds. We are staggered by the one just as by the other. In both cases our whole ordinary man shrinks back, in perplexed confusion, from the conclusion. Our brain seems to reel for a moment. Our ordinary mind crumples up. We do not know at first where we are.

So true is it that the moment we genuinely follow out life to its real grounds, we find ourselves facing a tremendous abyss, from which we recoil—an abyss before which our more instinctive rough-and-ready experience is stricken “with blank misgivings, and trembles like a guilty thing surprised.” This “blank misgiving of the creature moving about in works not realized” is common both to religion and to metaphysics. And, in recognizing this common result, we win some confidence back again. We have a companion in our perplexity—a companion who is, nevertheless, stalwart and undaunted in spite of the experience which has so staggered us. This companion is a sturdy combatant; and so far at least fights at our side, in that it is ready to expect some such recoil of the natural man, when he first brings conscious reflection to bear on his common acts; and to assert that the recoil, far from discrediting the truth of the position taken up, only proves how blind and inadequate is our ordinary everyday experience to the wonders of its own existence.

But here we can leave our metaphysical companions. They have been, so far, our very good friends. They have united themselves with our pledge to hold fast to the inner life as against the outer whenever the two collide, and in spite of the apparent violence of the collision. But we and they part company, more or less, as to the particular factor in that inner life on which to lay most significant stress. They call upon us to trust our inner *reason* at all hazards, in the face of outward appearance. But religion makes

another call altogether. It demands a different act of trust. It asks us to trust the spiritual *will*, as we know it in its moral freedom, in the face of all outward necessities and conditions that may appear to imprison it. That spiritual energy, springing up within our innermost self, is the root-fact of the inner life. With its existence, with its recognition, religion comes into play. And all the wonderful world of man's spiritual experiences is the record and the issue of its growth and development.

This spiritual spring of force is always apt to disappear from sight when we try to view it from outside; when we attempt to observe it as a spectator; when we survey man in the mass. As we cast our eyes abroad and about, we lose it; we cannot be sure of its whereabouts. It seems to disappear and die away, behind all the weight and multitude of enviroing circumstances.

But if we take our stand within, if we retreat within the inner world that we really know and understand, if we appeal to what we experience in ourselves, there it certainly is. We may have neglected it until it has ebbed low, but then we know the reason; it is our neglect, or lack of faith, or timidity of spirit. But it could have been there. We could have had the force which constitutes men spiritual beings. The spiritual instincts, cravings, fears, hopes, to which religion appeals are ours; we know them, we understand what is meant. We too have made our efforts, had our struggles. We have aspired and fallen and striven, and risen again and stumbled, and cried to God and found help in time of need. We have had a spiritual

story. In childhood, at least, it was simple and full; sometimes, perhaps, in boyhood it was passionately strong. Yes, and I cannot but think that it would be strong still; that we should never have doubted it, never have mistrusted it; that we should always, by inward instinct, have turned to God, and clung to Him in prayer, and have held the feet of Jesus and have yielded to the supremacy of His voice, if it had not been for the hostile set of external forces—forces of argument, forces of habit drawn from that outer world of men and things, which looks so strangely unlike our inner life, and seems so alien to it, so hard and material and conventional and chilling. We should still have been unhesitatingly religious if it had not been that these other counter-forces had daunted us and disturbed us, so that our natural inward motions lost their native verve, and shrank and wavered and collapsed.

Now, it is against surrender of this kind that we are summoned to stand firm by faith in God. Here is the very trial and proof of faith. Faith is that which, in the face of the opposing perplexities, yet holds fast to that which it knows—to that which it has for its own self found to be real. Faith, our inward spiritual force, can never rightly yield to any counter-pressure from without. It has its inward experiences, its inward facts. By these it stands to the death. The only attack that it can dread must come from within. If its inward life should fail and break, then it would be serious. But so long as it is a mere conflict between what it knows to be true within and what

it sees happening without, it has but one course, but one duty—to be loyal to itself. Loyal to itself, not in ignoring or denying the facts that perplex it, but loyal in asserting its own witness to its own facts; loyal in claiming for them objective worth, as solid, valid, and real.

This loyalty to the fact revealed by inner knowledge of self, as against the outer knowledge of the world about us in cases where they collide, may challenge us in various ways. Let us notice two.

1. It may challenge us to believe in spiritual change, or conversion. I know nothing which so immediately follows on a general survey of man in the mass, than a conviction that what he is now that he will remain; that there is no power to alter his nature, character, type, habit. We all know it in its most deadening form, in our survey of the vast heathen world. Travelling among men of another faith, looking on at them as upon interesting specimens, watching their age-long habits and immemorial religious rites, the great shadow of an immense depression falls upon the soul. It all looks so firmly rooted, so ingrained, so natural, that the very idea that this huge and ancient system of theirs could ever fall and break, seems to disappear, to become absurd. The eyes, as they range about, can see no sign of the inward force from which such an upheaval could come. Everything seems settled, fixed, necessitated. As it has been, so it will be. These dark people are what they are; and that they must remain. To begin to talk to them of our Christian faith, to conceive them sitting in rows in churches such as ours—why, it

is simply ludicrous ! So the traveller who passes by must feel ; he cannot help it. Only he need not hurry home to tell us this as a new revelation. It merely means that he is a traveller, and has looked only at the outside of things, and has never got inside at all. This is the largest and most obvious instance, but the same effect is continually taking place. In all our surveys of the classes or the masses into which men, looked at from without, divide themselves, in hoping for a change in them we can get as far as imagining a change of outward conditions and circumstances, and with this we imagine might begin a bettering of inward life. But, then, this kind of hope is always disappointing us, and we gradually learn that the outward conditions cannot be changed unless the inner life is bettered also ; and then we lapse back into despair. How is the inward character ever to become other than it is ? How can we expect greater moral control, a higher wisdom, in the lowest grades of men ? Always there must be that wretched overplus of population which will sink to the bottom, do what we may, by its own moral weakness—always the thriftless, the indigent, the idle, the drunkard. Such a despair as this settles down on many a soul like a black cloud—a sense of the hopelessness of a change in the misery and degradation which our cities seem now to create of themselves by some terrible necessity.

In face of that despair, it is our first duty to hold fast by the verities of the spiritual world which we know from within. From within, where the soul knows itself, it knows perfectly well the power that

could make a spiritual change. A spiritual change! Ah! our souls know what that might mean. We, in ourselves, recognize that high call that sounds to us, "Be converted, be healed." We know the power of the Voice that cries, "Come to Me, O weary and heavy laden! I will take away your heart of stone; I will give you a heart of flesh." It has been a fact with us, or it could be a fact; and we know it. So far as it has not been, it is we who have failed it—fought, resisted, grown deaf and sullen, or weak and faint-hearted. But the possibility is true, is real. Clouds upon clouds of living witnesses encompass us round about when we doubt it of ourselves. And all of them cry with one voice, "We know it; we found it so. We were snatched out of an old and base life into the new clean ways of godliness and peace. We had our robes washed. We were foul; we became white as snow. And we are here to prove it, to bear witness that we were of those who were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and the mighty power of God. And what we are, you and all may be." Ah! from within the soul we do know this; we do respond. And the demand is that we should be loyal to this undying hope for others, when the outer survey of man crows us with its deadly chill, with its dreadful impotence—loyal to the inward conviction! Man can, by God's inward operating, be made free from all he is. Through the Name of Jesus Christ he can be changed.

2. It challenges us through death. The outward survey of death and its doings—can anything be more daunting, more disheartening? Death, as we

gaze out at it, seems to us wholly victorious. It appears utterly to close the story of man's life. We hear of it in some remote famine desolating unknown Indian lands, or we read how some regiment of our own boy-soldiers is decimated in some unhealthy station, flooded under blinding Eastern rains. "They die like flies," we are told. Or there is that awful explosion in some Welsh or northern coal-pit! We read the heart-rending details of the desperate search, of the yet more desperate finding. We see in the *Graphic* the picture of the blackened bodies rolled up under some rough shed in melancholy rows, to be recognized and claimed by poor broken-hearted wives, who alone can distinguish, with keen eyes of affection, the featureless faces that the fire has eaten. How hopelessly sad, how cruel it all seems! That is the end for those poor fellows. Nothing in the mere sight suggests any outlook into a world beyond. Everything that is there before us declares that all is over and done. Well may they weep, those poor women who have lost all! Those black, silent corpses have to the outer eye but one miserable message. Never more, never more, the cheery voice at eventide, greeting the children who run to meet "father" at the gate. Never more for the mother the strong arm that brought bread, the bright eye that laughed and danced with the light of old affection, with the memory of the days when they wooed and were wed. Never more! nothing more but silence—helpless, pitiful silence. And soon the hurried earth will be thrown over it. Now all is gone. A last

look, a bitter tear, a choking sob, and then the turn home to the blank, darkened house. The iron door is shut; the past is dead and done with; it is the end.

Such is death as we look out upon its public general ravages; so grim, so blind, so irrevocable, so entire. Men die like dogs, we say; they sink and go under, and the black waters roll over them. Not a ripple soon will tell that they had ever been at all. Such is our temper, as we wander through some vast cemetery and read the unknown names—sad records of old lost loves, where beneath the bodies rot away into the dust. “They lie in the hell like sheep,” we murmur in the angry bitterness of our hearts. “They lie in the hell like sheep; death gnaweth upon them.” And if any one speaks of them as meeting again hereafter, if we try to picture them all rising in their old familiar shapes and types, and knowing each other again—why, it all sounds like a fairy tale, unreal, fantastic; nay, almost ludicrous in its shallow promise, in face of the horrible severity of the actual fact.

Such is the outer survey of death. But, my brethren, death looked at from within—ah, how strangely different! From within, looking at death from out of the heart of that inner life which we really know, no one can ever bring himself to believe that he can possibly die—can possibly come to an end at death. In spite of all the daily and hourly news of death’s doings over the whole earth, one’s own death seems as inconceivable as ever.

The preacher parades the overwhelming evidence;

he reminds us that it is the one certain thing that must happen to us. "One day," he cries, "it will be there. You will be carried out. Over you will be cast the handful of dust." Yes, we cannot deny it. But yet he does not persuade us. Does any one of us believe it—believe it, not with the forced assent of the intellect only, but with heart and imagination and conviction? It is in vain! Till it actually is there, knocking at the door, till the first slow symptoms begin to give positive warning, we cannot take it in. The imagination refuses it. The whole man repudiates it. We try to lay hold of it. We say over and over to ourselves, "I must die. The end will come!" But no! it eludes us. It is impossible. The preacher may complain of us. But ought he to complain? Is not the imaginative impossibility of accepting it just the clearest evidence of what we are within? Being what we are, what we know ourselves to be, it is idle to arrest our outlook at the fact of death. To do so is to come into direct collision with our reason and our imagination. And this is not out of selfish motives; not because we overrate our own importance; but purely because the idea of death is so radically inconsistent with our inward character that it cannot adapt itself to it, cannot be harmonized with it, cannot be tolerated. Nothing can conceivably make death look like a rational and consistent end of life. Die! of course we must. But death cannot be the close. It can only be an incident. Otherwise we have no intelligible account to give of ourselves, or of life. Our career becomes a fantastic and ludicrous piece of waste.

And this, which we inevitably feel of ourselves, is just as forcibly brought home when those we love dearest die. Love admits us inside their inner world. We see them from within, as we see ourselves. We are in the secret of their character—behind the scenes. And, therefore, when we see their poor dead body laid out in its silence, in its blindness, we know at once that this cannot be the end. This that we see is not the reasonable close of the story. It cannot be made to look like it. It is madness to imagine it. It is so hopelessly inadequate.

So sharp is the contrast to what we felt before at the sight of the dead body of one unknown to us. There the absurdity seemed to lie in supposing him to have survived in any way—so wholly dead and gone he looked. Now the absurdity is all the other way. It is childish, it is ludicrous, to imagine anything else but that the character we know is still alive. It is almost impossible to doubt it. We know it with the certainty that nothing can shake.

Nothing can shake? No, nothing, if we will but be loyal to it—loyal to it as our deepest, most instinctive, most intelligible, most rational conviction, based on the evidence of that one life which we really know, and of which we do possess the measure and the right to judge—loyal to it against the outward pressure of that external life, over the mere surface of which our eye ranges, and of which we see only the appearance, and know nothing of its inner cause and secret.

Be loyal. Make no surrender. Such a surrender can never be justified by reason; it can only be a

surrender, through panic, to menaces from without. "Death, death!" broke out Robert Browning in his last years, speaking of the new literature which makes death its theme. "It is this idle, cowardly carping on death that I so dislike. For my part, I deny that death is the end of life. Never say of me that I am dead!" So he spoke at the close, still delivering his unfaltering witness. So may we, loyal to the inward verdict, hold fast our faith in our own souls and in God.

SERMON IV.

FROM FAITH TO FAITH—IV.

“*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*”—ST. JOHN v. 17.

“I AM;” “God is.” These elemental announcements, from out of which religion springs, do, as we plead, start into life for all of us who will dare to be true to the verdicts and the convictions of our inner self. We cannot think of ourselves without arriving at them. We may be startled at what they involve, when first we pass beyond the stage of simple spontaneity, and begin to reflect on the positive or literal value of these announcements. We may recoil from the difficulty of suddenly reconciling them with the actual outward aspect of daily things. But the start is no confutation of their truth. The mere recoil is as much an argument against the worth of our daily experience as it is against the validity of the verities with which that experience so violently collides. The start, the recoil, are but the tremblings of a guilty thing surprised—surprised to find how “dreadful is this place” in which it had seen nothing but a hard ridge of rocky hills, but which it suddenly discovers to be a staircase running to heaven, up and down which the swift angels of God are passing and repass-

ing. The bewilderment of consciousness as it first faces the recognized truth is due to the excess of light which floods its glory down. To retire before the bewilderment is to retreat down from the bright sunlight into the cave, which only does not bewilder us because its light is so dim.

“God is;” “I am.” That is my spiritual verdict. My being wells up into me from a Source beyond itself—that I most certainly know. My character stays itself by a force which builds it from within, and which is to me as deep and as mysterious a surprise as it can be to any others who notice me and describe me, and calculate on what I shall do or say. I know no more than they what it will be. It is Another Who speaks through me by making me what I am. As I am, I shall speak and act; but what I am is a strange revelation, in which I am as interested as they. I am a revelation to myself. By act, by deed, I myself learn what I am—learn the degree of power and gift that is lodged in me; learn my own characteristics, my own value, my own weakness. Only under this pressure of action can I discover it. I cannot tell beforehand; I make ludicrous misjudgments. I have to watch on at my own story as at a picture in which I can see what my countenance really is, or at a book in which I may read the form and fashion of my own innermost mind and heart and passion. So little is it I who can account for myself! It is Another’s Will that I observe unveiling itself through the medium of my own life and character. And this Other must have moral character, for It creates

It in me; It must have affection, for It quickens my own affection; It must love, for It makes me love; It must think, for else how can my thought spring from It? It cannot be less than I. It can only be more.

So I discover myself in It. Through myself, who am nothing if I am not its creature, I know It, I embrace It, I lay hold on It; and to this discovery I give voice in prayer; "Verily, O my God, Thou art my Father, and I am Thy child! Thou makest me, at every instant, without and beyond my own knowledge. Every moment I am becoming what I myself could not foretell, but what Thou hast made me to be. Thou makest me in and for Thyself. Help me, then, to be what Thou wouldst have me to be!" Here is the formal verdict of faith, delivered out of the inner judgment of our spiritual self. With this, religious life begins.

But then, that spiritual self of mine is no solitary and simple creature, divorced from all conditions and circumstances, and separate from its fellows—standing alone, face to face, with its God and Father. Nay; it has already gone a long way; it has passed through manifold experiences, which have left many a mark and scar upon it. It has had a growth, arduous and painful, and though it cannot tell wholly how it has come to pass, it knows and feels, with too terrible clearness, that the growth has not gone smoothly forward. It has got distorted and awry; it has been warped and mangled and disfigured. What is it, this dark trouble, that has embittered its movements and made barren its

promise? What is it, this secret flaw, that curses with dreadful impotence its hope of secure advance? Will it never get free from the tangle? Will it never shake off the taint? Will the horror of defeat haunt it for ever?

And it looks out upon its fellows to find some answer to the trouble within, and lo! they all suffer from a like disease, they all are stricken with the same lurking palsy. And, ever as it searches, the evil shows deeper roots, ever its issues darker. Very old the wrong seems to be; it runs back behind all the divisions into races and nations into which man have cloven, for all alike are bitten by the same poison. The soul pores over the back records of the human history, and ever the long road by which it has reached its present spot lengthens and lengthens. Its own story winds itself in with that of all, for all have fallen under the curse; and the story of the whole body stretches back and back, into dim vistas of unknown depths—depths of black jungle, where savage and beast wrestle darkly together for cruel mastery. Bright spots there are, flashes of illuminating hope. Behind, far behind all, there is the blessed assurance that all was once very good. Goodness lies at the root of roots; of this the soul can be absolutely certain. The outer assurance tallies with the necessities of its inward conviction. But this only intensifies the mystery of the problem. Why this fall, this lapse, this distortion? And still, as the weary story of man unwinds its coils, the soul recognizes the light and glow of the first promise upon it. Still man is ever

on the edge of an escape from his wretched thralldom. Still, in spite of the tangle, he moves forward; he is never wholly imprisoned; he gets through. His story is a story of advance, though it be as through a black jungle darker than any in darkest Africa. Ever the good hope that is in him from the first holds on; it is never quenched; it pushes, it draws, and he follows through the darkness. He moves out into the light. Civilization grows about him; and richer, fuller life puts out ever new capacities; a loftier call ever sounds increasingly in his ears. Higher and higher the destiny rises, ever as deeper and deeper shows itself the curse. What is it all, what does it mean, this paradoxical career, that recedes as it advances, and advances as it recedes?

Now, all that is familiar enough. But I want to-day to see how it tells on the elemental truth with which we began. "God is;" "I am." Yes; but I am what I have been, what this story has made me, what fellowship with my kind proves to be. "I am" a being with all this bitter tale about me and in me; a being whose long growth has accumulated this network about it of perplexities and dismays. "I am" what I am now to-day, with all the inwoven problem that to-day brings with it. "I am" a part and parcel of this large humanity outside, encumbered with wrongs, soured by disasters, enfeebled by disease, blind with pain, stricken with the sentence of death. That is what "I am." And as, at the first, I knew God through myself, through being what "I am," so this further knowledge of myself, in my complicated and perplexed

existence, throws me directly upon God for an answer. It must bear upon my knowledge of Him ; it must all grow up into my relationship to him.

We can see how vital, how immediate the question becomes. For the argument lies all along from myself to God. Because I can think, He Who made me must be One Who thinks. So I had felt sure. But what follows then, from the fact that I am full of misery and sin? Is He too? And if that is impossible ; if I know that He made man very good ; if that is an ineradicable condition of my soul, how has He allowed it to happen, this disaster? and what is He about, now that it has happened?

Such questions besiege and beset ; they are vehement ; they will not be denied ; and, as they beat in upon us with an ever-intensified insistence, the dilemma forces itself forward more and more. " Either God, my Father, has responded to these questions ; or He cannot be my Father."

If God ever made us, and made us in our native goodness, then He must, of sheer necessity, have done something to meet the problems that started into life at our wrong-doing. Nay, more ; He must, of necessity, be meeting those problems as they encompass me at this very hour. He must ! It is no mere probability, based on my private sense of what befits God. No ! It is a necessity of which I am speaking. For the relationship in which He and I stand to one another is no abstract, general, primæval affair. It is a living and active business of to-day. We are not talking of some remote hour, behind all memory, when He first

made man, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. It is *now* that He is making men—making me what I am to-day. At the roots of my sustained existence He must be still breathing the living breath. He is stirring in me with creative energy, enabling me to think, move, speak—now, as I stand here.

But then, if so, He must be adapting His inner action to my *present* condition. If I have grown and changed, then He must have followed up all that growth and change, shifting as I shifted, responding to my advance, guarding against my lapses, meeting my motions. Step by step He has been with me, and His work has never stopped still. This is the very quality of life—this self-adaptation to the shifts of changing conditions. And God is Life. And my conditions are ever changing. His work in me must have taken new shapes and colours, as it accompanied my irregular path. “My Father must be working hitherto.”

Do you say, God is ever the same; and therefore He cannot change? Nay! rather, because He is ever the same therefore He must change. He must change in order to retain His sameness, His self-identity, in face of a changing environment. If the situation shifts, then the personal character of a living agent can only be retained and secured at the cost of ever-varying application of Himself to the moving scene. We know this well enough in ourselves; and so with God. God is ever the same, because, under any conceivable change of circumstance, He still reveals identically the same moral Personality. But such a revelation would be impossible if His action did not

differ under two different circumstances. We should be puzzled, thrown out; the unity of the character would be broken. We can only recognize the persistent unity if it so varies its action under different conditions that we can always say, "That is what I should have expected. That is the one I knew before; I can recognize Him again. Shift and change as the conditions may, He always so meets the sequence of changes that I can perceive Him to be still and ever governed by the same identical motives—to be moving towards the same identical end." That is why we say, "If man's history has been a history of ever-accumulating changes, then I cannot believe in a living God Who does not show Himself, in ever-new acts, to be responding to these changes."

My brothers, here is the point that I would press upon you. God, if He be God, must be a God of revelation. For what is revelation? Revelation is simply and shortly that which God has done for man over and above that which He did in creating him as His child. We are so apt to speak as if revelation had only to do with giving us new *knowledge* of God. And this just fails to impress us with the importance of a revelation. It may be an advantage, we think, to have additional knowledge of God, but still, not a matter of life or death. In reality, revelation is a new manifestation of God's activity. To believe in a revealed God is to believe in a God Who has *done* something new for us. That is what makes it so vitally urgent a matter. "Revelation" is, in its essence, that new and advancing action which God, the good Father,

has taken in view of all that man has brought upon himself since he started to make himself a history. Things have happened since that start—things good and things evil; things of hope, things of despair; anyhow, things of the deepest interest to man's salvation, in body and soul. Ever, day by day, we are learning how deep that interest goes, how immense is the problem man has made for himself, how terrible are the perils, how awful the disaster. And, therefore, day by day it becomes harder and harder to retain any belief in a Father in heaven Who makes no sign of participation in this body of new interests, Who never issues out to meet the growing problem, Who never breaks the relentless silence, Who never takes any part in what is going on. We cannot believe in a Father Who made us very good and yet has done nothing—has taken no measures, has shown no change, when we became very bad. Such a Father, Who confines Himself to starting us, and then idly watches our career from afar, is as impossible, as intolerable, as unintelligible, as irrational, as contradictory a conception as a Creator of the world Who made it at the first day and has never been heard of since. This last deistic abstraction has been exploded into fragments by evolution; we all know that if God ever created the world, He is still creating the ever-changing transformation of it. And so with man. If He is man's Father, He is so at this hour; and that means that His Fatherhood is in active, working contact with man as he is to-day; and if man to-day is a creature with a long and developed history, with ever-

novel incidents, with ever-fresh surprises, then the Fatherhood that is in working contact with such a history must have taken action to meet it—must have let itself also appear in the shape of novel incidents and fresh surprises. It must have done something to keep itself level with the developed facts. It must have advanced beyond its early positions. It must have faced the growing history at every new turn. Whatever man has been through, since the bright, brief days in Eden, of sorrow, pain, loss, death, through that also the Fatherhood of God must have equally passed; within the heart of the same bitter experience, it too must have verified to man the self-identity of its unfaltering love, of its unchanging hope, of its eternal strength to rescue and redeem. God cannot be God unless He has revealed Himself—unless He has shown Himself, since the first day, in energetic action amid the scenery of man's development, coping with its deepening horrors, responding to its heightened capacities. God, our Father, if He is our Father, "must have been working hitherto."

"God must have made a revelation." That is the truth at which we of to-day are fast arriving. Every passing minute sets its seal to the doom of a belief that tries to hold its faith in a good Father Who has done nothing to prove and certify His living Fatherhood amid the weight and volume of our growing and terrific problem. The tradition of such a blank deistic belief has been, until our generation, very strong in England; in men of a certain age it lingers still, but only in those who were born before the current of the

forces, set moving by modern thought, were in full swing. But now these currents are driving hard, and who, of the next generation, will have strength to retain a belief in God if it is not a belief in the God Who has also revealed Himself in Christ?

“In Christ.” Ah, beloved! we may seem to have arrived at the Name abruptly; but if once we allow that God must have revealed Himself, must have taken some special action in view of the special circumstance of sin, must have entered on the scene in some way that brings Him level with the historical facts of to-day,—then where else will any sane man look for such a revelation but in Christ Jesus? In what other religion can we suppose for a moment that God has seriously put out the special powers of His Fatherhood in response to our civilization? Is there any that we can dare to bring out into the arena, and to challenge Christ for this, His pre-eminent significance?

No! If God has ever pitted Himself in open war against the encroachments of our sins; if God has ever stepped out to handle the terrors of pain and sorrow; if He has ever moved forward to grapple with the weight of the world's woes, and has ever striven to subdue and to purge and to transfigure it;—then there can be no doubt about it. It is in Jesus only, in His raising the crucified Humanity of Jesus from the dead to His throne on high, far above all principalities and powers,—it is in this, or in nothing, that He has done it. There is nothing else that even can presume to make such a claim.

Here, then, is our position. If God has ever laid hands upon human life as it is to-day, in its pitifulness and in its glories, He did it in Christ. And if He has never so laid hands, can we retain any *practical* belief in a God so remote, so idle, so silent? "Verily," we say, "the Father must be One Who worketh hitherto;" and if the Father worketh, then, as the Lord Himself said, "I, Christ, work with Him also."

"My Father worketh hitherto." Yea, though on the seventh day He rested from all His work, yet man's sin broke up the rest. God could not rest when His child had wandered from the fold. No rest for Him, the Good Shepherd, in His blessed home. He must rise and leave the pleasant pastures, and be off over the bare and solitary hills to seek and save the sheep He had lost. No rest since that sad hour of the Fall. "My Father has been hard at the work again; and I work also."

And to-day, brethren, we celebrate with emphasis that continual, that unresting work.¹ For it is just this ceaseless work of God which is carried on, hour by hour, and minute by minute, through that most powerful Spirit Who has issued from the Father and the Son, to spread abroad the energy of their faithful work, to bring it into ever-present action amid all the shifting circumstances of man's prolonged history. He, the Holy Spirit, is the Power of the Divine work, as it comes into perpetual play; in contact with the world as it is; in response to the actual needs and necessities of struggling and failing souls;

¹ Whit-Sunday.

in conflict with the urgent and perilous onsets of world and flesh and devil. He is the Spirit of all revelation—of all present, active, living manifestation of God, here and now, in infinite adaptation to the ever-changing crisis.

Yes; this is our full and Catholic creed. God must be a God of revelation, "our Hope and our Strength," just because He is "a very present Help in trouble." In Jesus Christ alone does He offer Himself as such a God as this, Who ever worketh for us. And the work of Jesus Christ can only be ours to-day, if it is not high up in heaven, that we might ask in despair, "How can I reach it?" or far over the sea, nor deep down in the earth, that we might cry, "It can never be mine;" but if it is very nigh us, in our hearts, and in our mouths, carried thither by this Spirit, the Comforter, who Himself is implanted within the innermost secret places of our being, and there works with the Father and the Son.

He works; God works—works in a way that meets our actual case—works with an energy, a might, a living force that can handle and master the facts as they stand to-day. That is our message on this Whit-Sunday—the one message, surely, that we most sorely need. There is no use in a vague, hopeful statement that we have a Father up there away in heaven. The battle is on us, fierce and sharp. Our sins fight hard; worldliness chokes; sloth benumbs. We are spiritually dying of sheer, pitiful slackness. Something must be done for us, or we are lost. Yes; and therefore God is here in act and deed, showing Himself as a fire

within you—a fire that works and stirs. He is here to do something for you. No idle dream, no empty phrase, no broad and vapid generalization, but a Force entering in, laying hold, turning by violence the currents of your life, driving back the pressure that imprisons you. And, believe me, it is your battle, your particular battle, in which He engages; not merely the general warfare against the world's sin, but that secret, inner struggle which is so peculiarly your own and not another's, of which you alone can know the stress, can measure the special interest. That is the battle in which the Spirit mixes, to which He adapts and applies Himself. He and you alone, in your separate characteristic individuality. Whatever you need, that He will make Himself be to you. Not something else, but that. Are you cold? He will come as warmth. Are you hot with passion? He will fall as cooling dew. Are you sterile and hard? He will moisten with soft rain. Are you rank? He will purge and prune. Are you weak and thin? He will stiffen and enrich. Are you slothful? He will quicken. Are you hasty? He will steal in as patience. Are you timid? He will be to you a sword. Are you proud? He will breathe tenderness. So varied, so personal, so close, so exact, so direct, so practical, so real He is; applying Himself to each separately, to do and to undo, to build up and to pull down. So He will work, if you will have Him, if you will lift your prayer—

“Come, Thou Holy Spirit, come,
And from Thy celestial home
Shed a ray of light divine;

“Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour Thy dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away;
Bend the stubborn heart and will,
Melt the frozen, warm the chill,
Guide the steps that go astray.”

SERMON V.

THE WITNESS OF CHRIST.

“It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, the water, and the blood : and the three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater : for the witness of God is this, that He hath borne witness concerning His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself : he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar ; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.”—1 ST. JOHN v. 6-11.

“WITNESS!” The word, in its emphatic recurrence, is typical of the situation from out of which the Epistle springs. The special perils and anxieties with which the Church is now beset are changed from those with which we are familiar in the earlier Epistles of St. Paul. And it may be worth our while to remind ourselves of the contrast. There the effort had been to get the message itself of Christ out in its distinct and native force ; to disentangle it from the encompassing matter that obscured or distorted it ; to set it free from the misdirections to which it was liable, whether from Jewish or Gentile pressure. St. Paul was fighting its way through for it amid a bewildering mob of competitive principles. He had to clear up its

position, to fix its feet firm, to secure it from lapse and recoil and reaction. He had to sift the phrases which it could safely use, to find for it an unhampered and congenial utterance. His prime difficulty lay in enabling the young converts to grasp the significance of their new attachment to God, to give them such grip upon its peculiar distinctions that they could be trusted to hold it fast when the masterful presence of their teacher was withdrawn. It had been no light task to give outline and body to the conceptions which determine the secret communications of God with the human soul through Christ. The strain, the agony of the effort, is felt through the passionate words that break from the Apostle's lips in his appeals to Romans and Corinthians and Galatians, as he struggles to define for their clearer apprehension the nature and conditions of faith.

So it had been; but now, though again there is a crisis which draws on all the resources of a chief Apostle, its character is of another type.

The Church is shaken, but not so much with the difficulty of discovering its own proper language, or of realizing the distinctive elements of its faith, or of recognizing its own asserted independence, or of clearing the ground which it intends to occupy. All this has been largely achieved. The new religion has secured its place in the world; its form and its fashions are fairly distinct; its message is more or less unencumbered; its corporate life is assured. The body of believers has now possessed its faith for some years; some have grown up from childhood within its familiar

environment. There they stand, in compact possession of their position.

But over against them they find set, in resolute hostility, a world, intellectual and moral, that will not yield—a world fierce, hard, and strong. And the task given them to do begins to look tough and grim. It will be a long business. They are but as a spot of light amid a darkness that shows few signs of breaking. This “world” is, indeed, to be convinced, convicted, converted; but not, it seems, at a stroke, not in some rapid onset of victory. A long, slow, plodding fight is evidently ahead, the end of which no eye can yet recognize; and the way of advance is to be one of patient and austere tenacity, of dangerous discipline, of anxious endurance. This vast body of resistance that encompasses them with menace, has in it that which can terrify; it can overawe by its mass; it can frighten by its intellectual subtlety and scorn. And the faith that is to face this work must look well to itself. It is not enough that it should be there in the heart, however fervent or spontaneous. It must have felt itself over; it must have got itself in hand; it must have considered its own inherent character; it must have calculated its resources; it must have won deliberate control over its tools and weapons; it must have passed under test and examination; it must have recognized how far it means to go, and on what it can rely; it must be complete and prepared and explicit.

This is the need of the hour, and, to meet it, the writer of the Epistle (forgive me if I once for all call him St. John) sets himself, with the grave solemnity

of a love that will disguise nothing, to reinforce the convictions that are already the life of the believer. It is not that these convictions are indistinct or doubtful. "They already know Whom they have believed;" "These things have I written unto you that believe in the Name of the Son of God;" "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father; I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him Who is from the beginning; I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you;" "Beloved, now are we the sons of God;" "Ye are of God, little children;" "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." It is all there, already, this belief. He addresses Himself wholly to it. Because it is true, because they believe, therefore it is that He is speaking to them—speaking to them with such serious tenderness, such anxious yearning; measuring all the strain that must fall on the faith; repeating and repeating again the continual reassurance, that they have that already within them by which alone that strain can be borne.

What is that? What is the secret possession which alone can secure them in their belief amid the storm and stress of the fight? It is plain enough. And yet, with our familiar presuppositions of the spiritual idealism of St. John, it may surprise us to note it; for that on which he lays all the emphasis is the fact, the historical fact, once for all achieved, of "Jesus Christ come in the flesh." "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God."

"In the flesh!" There lies his emphasis and point. It is the actual event, which he himself witnessed, to which he is making appeal. Over and over again he dwells on its positive and real value. That which was "in the flesh," which stood there in front of the apostolic company—visible, objective, certain, subject to the test of every sense, certified by every co-operating signal, so that they heard it, so that they saw it with their eyes, so that they watched and studied and examined it, so that their hands could feel and touch and lay hold of it—that which, manifested under these reliable conditions, was shown, and presented, and laid open, and secured by experimental assurance of its valid solidity—it is that which he has to declare to them. That is the sole message he has to deliver. That is his dying legacy; that is the pledged warrant of victory; that is the one decisive apostolic deposit. He has nothing else to say but that, and what comes directly from it. It is all gathered up into one word! "We have seen it; and we do testify that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

"Jesus Christ come in the flesh." "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory." St. John delights in the enduring character of a fact such as this; he recognizes to the full its value, as a substantial event. It is to this act done "in the flesh" that he looks for the force with which this body of believers is to face the strain and terror of the situation. It is this which is to stand as a rock under their feet amid the drag of the floods.

And it is just because an event forms the base of all faith, that the same question is so urgent for his hearers, which presses upon us so sharply to-day. Where lies the evidence of the fact? Where can we gain assurance of its validity? What is the proof that can confirm and seal? This question of ours is there at work already, and its urgency can be measured by the frequency and the insistence with which St. John dwells on the term, with which he encounters it—"witness," "testimony"—*μαρτυρία*. Round and round the possibilities of this, his mind incessantly turns. There is a witness, an evidence, which may be had. And when we press forward to examine what this evidence is, we find that it is given in a variety of ways, through many correlated channels. It is given, first, through apostles, who touched and saw; or it is given through the Spirit, Who teaches all to confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh; or it is given through the triple work done on earth by the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; or it is given from within to him that believeth—who, in the act of belief in the Son of God, finds the evidence for it in Himself; or it is given from without by the Father, through the entire life of the Son on earth. God, as it were, is heard speaking in the acts of His Son's life, witnessing to their authenticity and authority and sanction, so that to refuse to believe in them is to make God a liar.

Now, these references are enough to suggest the subtle and manifold character of this *μαρτυρία* which St. John has in mind. It is no easy matter to seize

or to define it, but one note of it is for ever recurring. He regards the fact and the evidence for the fact as inseparable from one another. The evidence coheres with the fact itself to which it witnesses. It belongs to its proper presentation. It is the corroboration which faith wins for itself out of the very fact, by deliberate contact with it, by careful and intelligent apprehension of it, by sensitive adherence to it. According to the Apostle's conception, this momentous event is of such a kind that it conveys with it the assurance of its own validity to all those who have the spiritual sensibility and the needful insight to discern it. It is no hard and bald fact, standing off in stiff and stark externality, demanding only the naked evidence of its sheer occurrence. True, the evidence of its actuality by those who themselves heard, saw, and touched, is there to hand; and no one who reads those first three verses of the Epistle can possibly deem this apostolic testimony to be of slight moment in the eyes of St. John. But this apostolic witness itself had been a matter of moral, and not merely mechanical and formal, apprehension. It was, as he described it in the Gospel and Epistle, a privileged condition into which they had been slowly drawn, through severe sifting, under careful discipline, until their spiritual fibres had, by patient experiment, actually closed round the fact, and had absorbed its innermost significance, so that, in their recognition of its actual occurrence, they had fellowship with God, and tasted eternal life.

And as it had been to them, so must it be to those

who received the witness of it from their lips; the witness must be so received that the fact should be not merely notified to have occurred, but should become, by its apprehension, the entry into the same eternal life into which it had admitted the Apostle. Nothing less than that! They too, those hearers who had never seen but yet had believed, are called upon to step up on to the level at which the apostolic eye-witnesses themselves stood, and to share their confidence and their peace. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things write we unto you, that your joy"—your joy and ours—"may be full."

We see, then, how much he expects. The testimony given is to lift them up to where the Apostles stood, to enable them to see with apostolic eyes, and be partners in apostolic security of joy. But, of course, if this fact so handed down were a bare and naked occurrence, done and over, no evidence given by others of their own experience could ever convey a like force of assurance to those to whom any such direct experience was impossible. The evidence might, indeed, be so forcible and unquestionable as to compel assent, or at least to silence criticism, but it could not carry the hearers up into the very certainty which it itself embodied. It is otherwise with the fact now before us. It is transmitted indeed to them, who have not seen, through the apostolic witness of its reality: but it arrives not bare, but clothed; not silent, but

speaking; not dead, but alive. It arrives at them, it meets them, it offers itself to them, not with the blind and rigid assertion of its historical existence, not defying them at their peril to disprove it; but rather with the winning appeal, the candid invitation, as of a living thing which can respond to their questioning, can answer for itself, can surrender itself to their tentative touches; can explain itself, and justify itself, and plead for itself, and testify on its own behalf, and exhibit its reasons, and motives, and aims, and capacities, and results, so that they too (though receiving it from the lips of others who first saw and looked and knew) can share in that process of verification by which those eye-witnesses themselves had become sure of what it was that was being made manifest to them.

Now, it is this process of verification which St. John sums up in the word *μαρτυρία*. It is this to which he summons these anxious listeners of his, who believe, indeed, but yet need assurance of what it is that they believe. It is this which alone will lend them confidence and courage to face the hostile pressure of the world, so that they will "know that they have eternal life," and will "know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not"; and will "know that they are of God"; and will "know that the Son of God is come, and that He hath given them an understanding that they may know Him that is true." To know! to know! to know with certainty, with security, with peace,—ah! that is what they must win, and can win! Only, to win it, they must not be afraid

to look into their faith. Its early simplicity is inadequate for the task. They must unearth its roots; they must probe it, and note and sort and distinguish. They must go behind the mere "I believe!" and must seriously and patiently ask themselves, "What is it that I believe?" They must verify their belief. And this verification, we repeat, they must win out of the fact itself to which belief commit them. The fact is a living fact, and can make its own answers. By contact with it, by penetration into it, the fact will bear witness to itself.

1. How can this be? How can a fact be said to bear its own evidence with it? Well, broadly speaking, all facts of whatever kind to which we give internal credit do so—at least to some degree. For the credit we give them is derived, not from the mere evidence for their having occurred, but by their harmonious correspondence with the world into which they arrive. They fit it; they belong to it; they fall in with it; they take an appropriate place amid the general body of facts. That is the evidence for their reality which credible events carry with them. They may startle us, they may utterly upset our calculations and anticipations; but, nevertheless, their occurrence, however surprising or even unique, does not leave them aloof and detached in meaningless isolation, uncemented, unallied, unassimilated. They close in; they dovetail; they insert themselves with deft precision into the situation wherein they have entered. Things come together in unexpected ways, all about them and around. The gaps fill in; abrupt

corners disappear ; everything adapts itself to the new arrivals. That is why they win our willing acceptance. An event that might have appeared incredible to us beforehand would gain our adhesion so long as it exhibited this correspondence. It is this which convinces, even when the correspondence only reveals itself after the fact has occurred. Such a fact as this is luminous ; it carries with it the light by which we recognize its correspondence with the universe to which it claims to belong. It wins corroborative evidence for itself by shedding light on all about it ; and the environment, which it fits so cleanly, receives new meaning by the very cleanness of the fit ; its complications are simplified, its puzzles are cleared. The new facts and the old play into each other and confirm each other.

The process which I am describing is familiar to us all in the region of natural science. It is the very way in which a fresh discovery verifies itself and establishes its claim upon our credit. And it is this luminous self-evidential character which St. John would claim for the Christian fact. Its witness to itself is to be found in its complete correspondence with the spiritual situation into which it enters. It meets the religious case in which men find themselves. It sets itself at once in touch with their moral condition. True, the form and fashion of the fact may amaze ; it may exceed and even upset our anticipations. No one could have dared to presume that God would so "love the world that He would send His only begotten Son to be the Propitiation for

our sins." No! But when it once had happened, everything is seen to fall into its proper place. Confusions are cleared, tangles are unravelled. It is recognized as answering to the problem set. It illuminates the dark places. It supplies order, coherence, system, to all that now was seen to lead up to it. It is admitted with ease into the fraternity of events as they stood at the epoch when it arrived to claim a place among them. It slips in as the keystone to the arch, and so at once sanctions and is sanctioned by the laborious industry which has prepared for it its place.

Here is an effective *μαρτυρία*, a verification that can be gradually and growingly realized. We may gather it out of the harmonious relations which hold good between Christ and the sum of historical movements which we know as "the preparation." Or we may acknowledge its force through the correspondence between it and the actual situation of the inward man whom Christ offers to redeem. In either case, what is meant is that the fact to which Apostles testify is not bald, and strange, and solitary, and aloof; but bears down upon us charged with luminous significance, and knits itself with ready adaptation into the fabric of our life, and chimes in with our most natural needs, and so bears its own evidence with it of its appropriateness to the world into which it has been admitted.

But then, my brethren, if this evidence is to be appreciated, we see what is involved. The burden of responsibility for the nature of the proof is thrown back upon ourselves. It operates as a judgment,

detecting where we stand, and laying bare the secrets of the heart. The force and weight of the evidence will vary according to the degree to which the preliminary conditions have been realized to which this fresh arrival so fitly responds. The situation of which St. John is thinking is one into which, for instance, sin has entered deep. A whole world of religious experiences, hopes, possibilities, are lying robbed of their adequate solution; are missing their proper end; defeated, baffled, dismayed. And yet their existence demands that a goal should be reached; they cannot have risen so high and gone so far on an aimless excursion. A mass of undeniable miseries and fears have accumulated, which all lie there in critical bewilderment. They cannot have been what they are unless they were real; they cannot be real and yet miss altogether their reasonable issue. All this is presupposed as a matter of experience, when it is asserted that the Christian event is a luminous fact, that carries with it the evidence of its own correspondence to the body of fact into which it enters.

And, therefore, it is no wonder that St. John speaks of this *μαρτυρία* as if it were the affair of a whole life to win it. Each of these converts may have felt, perhaps with vivid intensity, this correspondence at that particular point in each man's soul where it peculiarly touched him. He may have given credit to the fact that Apostles asserted, in consequence of what he so recognized of its fitness. But still his own personal recognition would have covered but a very little bit of the ground. It would be limited to the

range of his own preliminary experiences—a mere tiny corner of the vast sum of human experience which had all to be met and answered. It would require care and pains and patience for him so to examine and study this fact in which he had believed, as to estimate its correspondence with the whole length and breadth and height of that spiritual situation in which the deepest life of mankind found itself engaged at the moment of the Lord's advent. This is the task to which St. John summons him. He must, if he would be sure of himself in the awful war with the world, brood and pore over the Divine fact presented to him—the fact in which he had believed—until the fact itself should grow ever more luminous with the intensity and the reality of the light that it threw on the tremendous issues that lie about man's destiny here and hereafter. Ever as he so pondered the illumination would increase; and in this increase of illuminative power would lie that evidence of the fact, that intelligent and convinced assurance, which his anxiety desired.

2. And there was another form of this witness which adhered in the fact—the witness, namely, which it gave to God the Father. Not only did the Christian fact harmonize with the human situation which it claimed to explain, but it carried with it a sudden sense of correspondence with the God in Whom men had believed. That belief of theirs had struggled on under the miserable irritation of impotence. Even the most loyal Israelite had been sensitive of a hitch in his argument, of a block in his free confession. There

came a point at which this faithful and merciful God failed to make His goodness manifest; the evidence broke off short. A cloud of darkness hung over the secret workings of His distributive justice. The question was ever deepening its intensity: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" In the passionate outbreak of Job, in many a heart-wrung passage of psalm and prophet, the wonder of the devout believer had been recorded at a God Who so hid Himself, Whose Arm was so shortened, Whose purpose was so obstructed. A shadow had been thrown on faith, the world, and life. Hesitations, and forebodings, and perplexities, and bewilderments lay heavy as a frost. What was it? Was God unjust, or neglectful? Could it be that the dark memories of early superstition had a genuine word to say for themselves, and that there was, indeed, something wilful, harsh, malignant, in God? Nay! impossible. All the glory of the true faith of Israel had lain in the struggle to free itself from the black imaginations of heathen worship. Yet why was so much left obscure, unreconciled? Why this withdrawal of God? Why this weakness? Why this delay? So foes had challenged from without. And sceptics probed, "Where is now thy God?" And anxious inquirers argued and discussed, and nothing came out clear. And "the just, living by faith," were driven into glum, resistant silence; without an answer to give to the triumphant taunts of the adversary, or to their own anxious suspicions. So loyalty was abashed, and hope was wistful and de-

pressed. Only faith could just hold on, with grim persistence, under the cloud of night, muttering to itself the watchwords of its creed. "At any rate, there will come a day! Not now, but hereafter, at last! It will come, and not tarry, that day of the Lord. At the last, the Redeemer will stand upon the earth, and all will be made manifest!" So those who feared the Lord had spoken, low and sad, with one another.

And now, the deed done in Christ had this about it to confirm its authenticity, that it swept away this cloud that had hung over the face of God. Suddenly, in a flash, the believer recognized the hand of the God Whom he had always trusted. The whole meaning of His long delays, of His strange patience, became intelligible, consistent, distinct. Just as the whole body of old Scriptures had fallen into system and order from the moment that the Apostles understood that the Christ was bound to suffer, so now the entire body of human experiences slipped into consistency with the righteousness of God so soon as the event of Christ was recognized. The shadows fled away. That high God, the Compassionate, the Strong, had not failed men's loyalty, men's faith. Just what they had believed Him to be, that He was, only far more true, far more pitiful, far more loving, far more victorious, than they had ever dreamed possible. The event tallied with His character; it bore on it His stamp. Any one, who had had faith in Him before, would detect His presence here. It was so like Him. It corresponded with the God in Whom Abraham and

Isaac and Jacob had believed ; it laid itself alongside all His other deeds done by God with the fathers of old time recorded in the Scriptures. It harmonized with the type.

This is the evidence which St. John declares that the Incarnation bears with it. The believer, in the act of believing, sets his seal to it that God is true. Before it, he felt that He must be, but he could not see how ; now he has the interpretation, the pledge, the proof. God is what he thought Him to be, only much more. We all know the effect of some sudden act done by a friend of ours, long known and loved, whose motives and mind had been somehow hidden from us. Lo ! at last he acts, and, in a moment, the act that results relates itself to him in his familiar aspect ; it falls into line with all that he has ever done ; it explains and is explained by the entire sequence of his behaviour. Everything is of a piece, and we cry out with delight, "There is my friend ! That is just his way. That is what I always felt him to be. This wears its reality, its evidence, upon its face. Its correspondence with him witnesses to its validity. He and I are reunited as we recognize each other again in it." Even such is the *μαρτυρία* which St. John is always asserting to belong to that which he had seen manifested in Christ. The Father—God the Father ! it was the Father of Whom it spoke in every detail ; it interpreted Him, it justified Him ; it brought Him level with the facts ; it cleared off every film of doubt or suspicion ; it made manifest that very identical Will,

which was known to be compact at once with righteousness and with love. It was such an act as could proceed from no other than He. And, in proceeding from Him, it made Him known in His undimmed Fatherhood, in His unhampered royalty, in His unflagging love. Accept this record that God hath testified of His Son, and God is once more brought into harmony with Himself; He is relieved from all obscurity; He is shown once again to be the Ruler and Governor of all things, holding the world in the hollow of His hand; His Name is reasserted in all its essential validity; He is indeed "the Lord, merciful, gracious, compassionate, long-suffering," even though "He can by no means clear the guilty." Surely an act which thus brings God the Almighty Father into perfect and satisfying correspondence with the development of human life—an act which, while accepting all the darkest facts, yet can succeed in restoring to man His full conception of a Father in heaven, which there had been so much to blacken and confuse,—surely such an act carries with it inherent evidence of its own validity. And, therefore, St. John's confidence in giving his witness of that which he "had seen, and heard, and handled," crowns itself in the consciousness that, through the power of this experience, he found himself brought out of a dark jungle of death into the clear light of day; he saw the face of God once more, undimmed and spotless. This was what fortified and corroborated his adherence to the fact. "The Life had been manifested," and with this result, that the message which he had now to declare unto his hearers

was just this—"that God was indeed Light," and only Light, and nothing but Light; and that "in Him was no darkness at all."

3. There is a third form of this witness to the reality of the fact, to which we must briefly refer. It is that which is expressed in the enigmatical reference to the three that bear witness on earth—the Spirit, the water, the blood. The reference itself may be couched in a difficult form, but its main significance is plain and familiar enough. Not only does the fact win for itself the confirmation that comes to it through its power to illuminate the tangled life of man and the obscured Name of God, but also it is unceasingly verified by the transformation which it works on the earth in which it has planted itself down. Here, again, it does not set itself down over against us in naked and cold rigidity, impassive and inert. No; it is living; it discharges energy; its work proceeds from it in vital issues. There is a visible stir that follows its arrival; a positive and enduring commotion. Earth has now admitted within its horizon a novel factor, and in consequence there are things now that happen which are the result of its being there. It was not done once for all, and then removed elsewhere. It was so done that its effects last on; its action is continued in the very form in which it itself first arrived. Even as it came through water and blood, so still, through water and blood, its witness is given out, its presence is sealed, its reality is corroborated.

Water and blood. These are real and concrete witnesses to Him Who came in the flesh. Here on earth,

among us, they still are wielded, filled, possessed by the Spirit—applied by the Spirit to the perpetual proof of the purification and redemption, which were once for all made manifest in Jesus Christ. Here they still are. For that fact which John witnessed was an act by which the Will of God set itself to a permanent movement in a certain fixed direction, down a definite channel, through deliberately determined means. Henceforward that Will can be detected as a working agency, thrusting its way along amid the circumstances of man's story on earth; and the signals of its activity, the lines of its direction, are given, or ought to be given, when and wherever their witness is perfected by the triple co-operation of Spirit and water and blood. These three agree in the one result that they should achieve, in the one origin to which they should witness, in the one authority which they should assert. The one Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, Himself the one Author and Finisher of all faith, continues, through these three, to challenge the attention and experience of all generations by an embodied activity, endowed with form and flesh. And through this combined concord of inward with outward, of living essence with objective factors, of witnessing Spirit with the testifying water and blood, the proof is decisively given, both of the presence and power of the working Will of God and of the validity of the originating fact in which that Will took form and came among us. "There are three that bear witness on earth—the Spirit, the water, and the blood. And these three agree in one."

My brethren, it is assurance, it is corroboration of the faith that is in us, which you and I so pitifully need. We all indeed recoil in terror, no doubt, from what are called "Christian evidences;" they seem so desperately remote from the thing itself; they are always setting us down before we have got to our goal. But intelligent and secure and ratified confirmation of what we hold—that is another matter. For that we surely hunger with a passionate desire. And it is this which St. John describes under the head of "witness." He conceives of it as a process of verification, just such as that by which every real fact commends itself to our gradual and growing confidence. Here is an event, he pleads, which draws the chaos of human life into harmonious coherence; which re-establishes and vindicates the obscured goodness of God; which leaves behind it a perpetuated stir of evident and concordant activities. Is not all that, taken together, the appropriate verification of its solid validity? And is not that a verification in which you and I may still share to-day?

For (1) the life and death of Christ, such as St. John records them, do most certainly bear about them a luminous correspondence to this world of ours into which they have entered. Its beautiful hope, its strange elemental goodness, its excellence, its grace, its suggestive innocence; and yet its shock of contrast, its awful conflict, its pitiable ruin, its hideous cruelty, its blood and fire and vapour of smoke, its pain and agony and dying,—all these elements of human life, in their amazing combination,

find their image and their place in the career that lies between the birth at Bethlehem and the Cross on Calvary. They and it understand one another; they fall together; they work in harmony; they belong to the same category. This new arrival pieces itself on with the old as nothing else does. It touches the same chords; it handles the same problems. Every other solution of the mixed mystery of our life seems to omit some factor from its calculation. Either it minimizes the goodness of men, or it ignores the shadows. But this recorded Gospel life fails us at no point in its proportion to the general sum of experience. Believe it; and it draws together elements that, without it, appear to be in hopeless collision. Believe it; and it spreads order, and system, and purpose, and hope, over that which, without it, is a tumbled heap of unreconciled materials. Believe it; and, as St. John testifies, you "walk in the light;" you hold a clue which does not fail you even in circumstances that assault and stagger your steadiness of head. Believe it; and human life, with all its terrible tale of disorder and damage, nevertheless finds itself moving towards a reasonable goal—finds itself crowned with a culminating act, which carries forward all its labour and experiment and discipline and hardship into a consummation that satisfies reason, imagination, feeling, and conscience. Such effects as these may not be proofs which should compel you to believe, but they are concordances to which your belief can rightly and fitly appeal.

And then (2), not only its witness to human life, but

also its witness to God—is not that still ours to-day? For we, if we are deprived of this event, cannot but be far more sensitive, even than they of old, to the oppressive absence of God from a scene which clamours for His manifestation. The weight of experience which of old so disturbed and depressed has done nothing but accumulate since the days of the psalmist—the bitter experience which forces from them, as from us, the cry of alarm, “O God, wherefore art Thou absent from us so long?” Why absent? why silent? and for so long? Where is His plan? His purpose—where do we find it? The evidence for His goodness, His compassion, His love—where does it appear in any shape that is level with the terrific seriousness of the situation, if Christ’s Cross and Passion are withdrawn? We may still murmur big phrases about His mercy and lovingkindness, to console and to cheer, but are they not all mere reverberations of the Word spoken in Jesus Christ? It is that amazing act which has made these phrases possible, has enabled them to pass as current coin. Withdraw that act altogether from the imagination, and the phrases would surely ring with a hollow insufficiency that is, to tortured hearts, at once cruel and absurd.

True—let us repeat it—we cannot base our belief on the mere fact that the Incarnation harmonizes with our radical conception of God; but, to those who believe, it does give us this assurance of its reality—that in it we know for a certainty that “God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”

And (3), lastly, the witness of the combined activities

of Spirit and water and blood. Ah! here we touch on a melancholy tale! The three have been too often sundered by the adverse accidents of history. Ugly breaches have been made in their agreement. The Spirit is too often driven to work far afield without the help of those instrumentalities through which this witness should instinctively proceed. Or, again, the pledges that perpetuate the deed done once for all on Calvary have been imprisoned in cold formalities, by which the warm breath of the Spirit has been barred from speaking out His living message to living souls. A broken witness, alas!—a poor divided witness! Such a bewildered witness as Christendom now offers cannot well demand the adhesion of mankind with the victorious force with which it would make its appeal if the triple witness of Spirit and water and blood were agreed in one. No; sadly we confess it. And yet, what a strange power it is which that ancient work of God, seen by St. John, still puts out over the hearts and souls of men to-day! Uneven and irregular as is its evidence, still, if we look around, what mysterious stirrings wake at the name of Jesus, and of His cleansing baptism, and of His redemptive blood! What a light it is that breaks out! How marvellously souls wake and move and sing! How the impotence ceases! How the tide of life runs back, free, strong, and glad! What is it that is happening? What is it that arrives and works? Is not there real reassurance in this witness? And whenever all this spiritual force combines, in its primitive co-operation, with the normal action of the

water and of the blood ; whenever the three, agreeing in one, do all bring their concerted powers to bear upon a surrendered heart ;—then, in that resultant character, what a perfection of spiritual workmanship is attained ! what a delicate adjustment of grace ! what a steadiness of hope ! what a fulness of faith ! what a fount of joy ! what a glory of love !

My brethren, such lives as these are still among us. They can be found, and seen, and studied, and handled. And where they are, there the witness of the three is complete ; not always enough, perhaps, amid the clashing divisions of the Church, to convert those who do not yet believe ; but to us who believe, oh, how blessed is the confirmation that they give ! how satisfying the reassurance ! We look and touch, and know that it is all true. There it is ; we have the witness of it. In the evidence of those gracious and beautiful lives, we believe the record that God hath given of His Son. “ We know that we are of God ; . . . we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true ; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ.” Yes, “ this is the true God, and this is eternal life.”

SERMON VI.

AUTHORITY AND FAITH.

“And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon’s porch. Then came the Jews round about Him, and said unto Him, How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.”—
ST. JOHN x. 22-24.

UNHAPPY Jews, with their plaintive perplexity, with their pathetic impatience! “Tell us plainly!” Could any request be more natural? Could any appeal be more justifiable? They are in suspense; they are tossed to and fro with every wind of suspicion, anxiety, doubt. At one moment they are drawn forward by the fascination of the Christ until they have all but thrown themselves at His feet and confessed His Name; and then, the next minute, some dark saying of His repels them: they stagger; they are at their wits’ end. Back comes with a rush the sweeping wave that had carried them so far towards land, and they cannot withstand the reaction; far away back they recoil into their old hesitation, dislike, resistance, anger. These very men who now are imploring for one plain word that they may believe, are, as we are told a few verses later, ready to kill, in their indignation, the man who they had hoped

might be the Christ. "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him." They cannot understand; they cannot get a grip upon His meaning; they cannot (as He says) "hear His voice"—everything that He utters confuses and disappoints them.

They cannot! And yet their surface desire is real; the impulse is strong that drives them near Him, to haunt Him, to hang upon His lips, to hunger for some utterance which would be absolutely distinct and intelligible. "How long dost Thou make us to doubt? How long wilt Thou keep our souls hung in anxiety?" That is the cry of genuine distress. It discloses a state of profound and prolonged trouble. And, in the thick of such distress, under the pressure of such trouble, what more natural than to throw the blame on Him Who refuses to clear away the clouds? He Himself forces the question. He will not let them alone by keeping Himself in the background. No! He almost makes parade of His presence. In full view—in the midst of the crowded feast, in the courts of the Temple, under the covered arcade called after Solomon—there He is. He is passing to and fro. It is winter, and it is cold; the people, therefore, congregate under the roofed colonnade; and He is among them. No eye can miss Him. He seems to challenge attention. And yet, though everything about Him suggests a problem, compels decision, thrusts a question upon the conscience, still the demand that He appears to make on men's faith never puts itself into positive words that are beyond discussion. He moves before their eyes, He speaks, He looks on them.

But what, precisely, does He mean? How does He define His exact position? No word falls from Him which puts the matter out of doubt. Yet, if He be what He implies, why not say so in a tone that could not be mistaken? "How long wilt Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly!"

"Tell us plainly!" It is a cry of trouble that we to-day, amid jarring cries and the confused noise of a vast unsettlement, echo, with pathetic insistence. "Tell us plainly!" That is exactly what every one is saying. It is all such a jangle, such a hubbub, this fretful civilization of ours! There is such a crowd at the feast; so much is going on; such a fuss and such a shouting; and in the midst of it all Jesus walks to and fro; and we recognize His innate look of supremacy over the world through which He passes. We desire ourselves to have some steady foundation for our feet upon which we can count amid the seething floods that tug and strain and eddy about us. We would know this secret of Jesus—this rock of peace on which His feet are ever set; this indomitable confidence with which He faces the dark hours. But, drawn as we are towards Him, He will not say the word that would clear up all confusion; He leaves us to gather His paramount claim out of sources that are beset with critical difficulties. It arrives at us only through a Church, whose earliest order and framework is hotly discussed; out of a Book, round the authority and the meaning of which rage innumerable disputes. This is not the authority that we need to support so immense, so awful a demand upon our belief. This

authority never gets itself free from the wretched entanglement of discussion—discussion critical, historical, literary, scientific. We ought to have something less hesitating, less dubious, less fluctuating; something with distinct outlines, something with emphatic utterances, something with unanswerable validity. Why does the Lord of lords move up and down the loud markets of the world, and yet deliver so uncertain a message? Is it never to end, this weary strife of tongues as to what He really said, and what He really meant if He ever said it? How long are we to listen to the arguments of apologists and the wrangling of the reviews? Surely we have the right to ask for a plain answer to a plain question. “How long wilt Thou hold us in suspense? If Thou be the Christ, at least tell us plainly.”

So it would seem to us. And yet to this particular form of appeal, it will be noticed, Christ never makes the requested response. The appeal would appear to have some flaw, some taint in it; for He, Who was always forward to meet half-way the faintest motion of faith which His presence evoked, nevertheless throws this demand for plain speech back on itself. Once before, in chap. viii., they broke out into the direct challenge, “Who art Thou?” And in answer He gave them an enigmatical phrase, which is to this day the despair of the commentators. What was it He said? Was it, “Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning,” as our common version has it; or was it, “Originally, or altogether, that which I am in speaking to you;” or did He mean, “Do ye ask what from

the very beginning I have also been telling you?" or was it simply a cry of surprise at the uselessness of trying to make them understand? "How is it that I ever speak to you at all!" It is exceedingly difficult to choose between such conflicting interpretations. But one thing, at any rate, is decisively clear, that under none of the interpretations did He give His questioners the plain assertion that they demanded. No! The words intensified the obscurity rather than relieved it. They express only His deep conviction, that if these men could not discover His personal significance through His habitual talk, then no precision, no emphasis, no positiveness of authoritative assertion would convey His meaning, or carry the due weight, or serve to convince.

And here again, in the passage where my text appears, He makes the same retort. His customary words have been sufficiently clear; those who had ears to hear and hearts to understand, had caught his meaning well enough. And whenever the words needed support to carry them home, His acts and works had offered corroborate evidence. Jesus answered, "I told you, and ye believed not. The works that I do in My Father's Name, these bear witness of Me."

It is not plainness of speech on His part that is really lacking. There is something behind in their spiritual condition which blocks the way of apprehension. Something there is which prohibits sympathy and breeds repugnance; and while this is so, no clearness of utterance, no loudness of speech, can bridge the breach. "Ye believe not, because ye are not of

My sheep, as I said unto you." "My sheep hear My voice; and I know them, and they follow Me."

"Tell us plainly!" It is the cry for an external authority to pronounce what is; and yet our Lord condemns and repels it in that shape as a false demand that cannot be met. It is a demand that has, somehow, mistaken the nature of authority in matters of faith. Can we at all see where the mistake lies? Let us try.

We are asking for authority; but the authority we need must be of a kind that elevates and purifies and educates and expands the spirit of those who submit. The act of their submission must be such as not to degrade, but to dignify; not to demoralize, but to concentrate; not to stifle, but to evoke the powers and capacities of the soul.

Now, how can this be? What must be the nature of an authority that can elicit these effects by the very force of its own assertion? There can be but one answer. It must be an authority which has a tie of living kinship with the spirits that are subject to its sway. It and they must be able to recognize themselves as one thing. There must be a bond of fraternity, of equality, of some kind which interprets and justifies the authority claimed. The authoritative command, the necessity, must have its root within, and not without, the submissive hearers, so that they can recognize in it the voice of their higher self—the voice of that paramount self which they have never realized, perhaps, and could not hope of themselves to attain, but yet which is their veritable reality in the sight of God.

They must be able to go with it as it commands, and to recognize in it a transfigured glory of what they themselves are, so that they are taken up into the very law before which they bow, and are obedient to themselves in being obedient to another.

This sounds abstruse and remote, yet it is easily recognizable in much that is very near us indeed.

For instance, we know how we are purified and elevated by bowing to the authority of scientific law in the natural universe. Why? Why should it not crush our spirits to find ourselves fixed under the teeth of this grinding tyranny of law, which flattens us down so relentlessly if we attempt to ignore it—which admits of no escape, no momentary release, no minute liberties to be taken with it? It is because the laws under which we bend are found to be our own; they have their seat, their justification, their explanation, within our own reason. In them we recognize something of ourselves—something that we can justify and interpret by reference to our own intellectual faculties. If the laws under which the world moves and acts were not allied to our own reason, we could never discover them. We should only abandon ourselves to an unintelligible and degrading necessity. But the perpetual growth of science is a perpetual witness to the relationship that holds between our intellect and natural law; and therefore science is a revelation of joy. We are thrilled by the recognition of the majesty of that reason of which we too are a part. And therefore, though science forces us more and more to obey, to submit, to yield; though it

intensifies the authoritative value of natural law over us, making it obvious folly to resist, or revolt, or trifle with it; though it reveals how immense and awful and tremendous is the system under which we are so rigorously bound;—nevertheless, instead of beating us under into craven-hearted servitude, it lifts us into delicious liberty, into splendid hope. Its authority acts as a purgative and a fortifying inspiration. We become more truly ourselves the more entirely we submit.

And then, with that other branch of law, of which the distinguished representatives are here before us to-day,¹ the same principle holds obviously good. The law of justice has no power to ennoble the people that it governs, unless it be recognized in its supremacy as the voice of the very conscience which has its seat within their own breasts. The private sense of right and of wrong must tally with the public law if things are to work healthily. Then, and then alone, is the authoritative assertion of law felt as an inspiring educational influence, which gives dignity and worth to the life, not only of those who declare and enforce the law, but just as much also of those who obey it. Each private citizen, then, lifts his head and moves with the freedom of an honourable self-respect, because he submits with a willing surrender to a higher power, which, though strong to assert itself over him, is yet his own—is yet himself. It is because of this necessity of carrying with it the verdict of the individual conscience, that law cannot safely travel beyond the

¹ Preached on the Sunday on which her Majesty's Judges attend at St. Paul's.

limits of the popular judgment. It is bound to have public opinion on its side, or else it drops inoperative, or even harms and degrades the public sense of social rectitude. It cannot successfully vindicate its authority by force beyond the point at which those whom it pronounces criminal acknowledge inwardly their own criminality, or, at least, are morally ashamed to face the overwhelming condemnation of their fellows. When once the legal criminal recognizes no moral authority in the power that condemns him; when once his own inner ethical standards differ seriously from those of the public law;—then law is powerless to build up a reliable and honest nation. It acts rather as a demoralizing force, confusing the judgment and undermining the solidity of the will. The degree to which the assertion of law and order serves to ennoble a people depends entirely on the degree to which its might is recognized by those who come under it, as embodying their own sense of right.

And this principle on which I am dwelling receives, of course, its plainest illustration from the highest region of law, of which the administration of national justice is but a partial reflection. We all know well enough that the authority of moral obligation, absolute and masterful as is its voice of command, nevertheless depends entirely for its weight on its correspondence with the inner conscience, over which it claims such unquestionable dominion. The verdict of duty, declaring without qualification or concession, “Thou shalt!” “Thou shalt not!” is only powerful, is only irresistible, because it is the man himself who speaks

in the supreme imperial voice. It is his own law which he obeys; its sentence finds an echo within his heart; he cannot deny its claim, for he cannot deny himself; and in yielding to it, therefore, he is not abased, but exalted, for, indeed, it is himself to whom he yields.

Authority, then, in all the forms in which it ennobles them over whom it is exerted, can never be wholly external or mechanical. It must come from within as well as from without; the authoritative force must include within its identity some element of the personal self over which it puts out its claim, so that the surrendered self, instead of becoming servile and lowered by its surrender, is lifted and expanded to a higher form of existence.

But then, my brethren, if this be so, there is very likely to be a difficulty about the "Tell us plainly!" Plainness of speech will never be enough, so long as the voice of command has no responsive reverberation within. The mere authority that says "Do this! Believe that!" is impotent until it has secured its inner and private co-operating fellow-agent; and, to secure this, it must labour long and painfully.

Just let us think how slow, how perilous, how tantalizing, the huge length of the process by which the needful "Tell us plainly!" has been reached in the regions of which we have been speaking—of physical science, of human law, of morality!

History—the tangled, pitiful, struggling history of mankind—is the record of how long it took to arrive at the recognition of the authority of law, whether in

nature, or in society, or in conscience. No "telling plainly," in some short phrase, here; but centuries of perplexity and strife, before man could disentangle, in the world of nature, an authority to which he could bow in the inspiration of a dignified obedience, because it was that in which his own reason saw itself mirrored and exalted. Or again, before he could find freedom and honour in submission to a justice, which bore the sword indeed to smite, but bore it in the name of him whom it smote. Or again, before he grew noble and heroic in bending to the iron yoke of duty, because he could recognize his own image in the stern and awful majesty that commanded and it stood fast. Long, long were the weary years before he had the heart to understand all this—before the speech of authority could become plain and clear in his ears.

True, it had spoken all the time clearly enough, through its mere might. Nature told him plainly enough where her authority lay, through the fires wherewith she burned him if he disobeyed her warnings, or the waters in which she drowned him. Human law again spoke plainly enough to him who disregarded it, through axe, and chains, and gallows. Here, indeed, the answer came decisively enough to all who said, "Tell us plainly."

But such assertions of authority through fear, if they stand alone, spoil, rather than aid, the man. The savage cowers down into a Caliban before the wayward and cruel despotism which to him is nature. The slave breeds new vices of falsehood and treachery

under the evil shadow of an alien rule that rests solely on its strength.

This fashion of plain speaking, the plain speech of bare assertion, of martial command, is only possible where the principle of true and elevating authority is least apprehended. Might can speak plainly whenever it wishes; its "day" is always ready; but Right, though its authority is so far higher and more absolute and more enduring, can only put out its authority through slow, patient discipline, by gradual and tentative methods, through long periods of puzzling suspense, in the weariness of which men in their impatience will again and again throng round it, crying, "How long—how long wilt thou make us to doubt? Oh, if thou art the truth, the way, the life, at least tell it us plainly!"

My brethren, we have got to master this truth in the region of religion. Religion goes deeper than all other influences into the recesses of the personal self, deeper than the appeal of nature to the human reason, deeper than the appeal of the moral law to the conscience. And, therefore, though its authority be throned in the highest heaven of heavens, in the paramount will of an almighty God, yet it least of all can afford to do without the coherent and willing adherence of the will which it claims to subdue. It aims beyond all other things at ennobling and transfiguring the man who submits to it. And, therefore, it must dismiss with a special abhorrence all external and mechanical and military methods of meeting its demands. It must at all hazards, at all costs, carry the subject-self

with it. It must have an echo within, responsive and alive; it can make nothing of a will that cannot utter its voluntary obedience in some "Amen, even so, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways. Amen, Alleluia."

And, therefore, it is that it spends such labour, such time, such endless pains, on winning this intelligent assent. Oh, the delays, the dreary silence, the complications, the inexplicable pauses! So long God takes in getting the revelation forward; in introducing His Son into the world. So slow, so pitifully slow, the creeping motion of His kingdom. Why not something more positive, we fretfully complain—something direct, rapid, sweeping, victorious? Why so much left to puzzle, to obscure, to confuse? Why does each generation of men find itself beset by some novel web of perplexities, so that as fast as one question finds its solution, another faces them to solve? A revelation ought surely to profess certainty, security, precision. It ought to have some voice that is ready to speak so that no one can mistake it. How can God have taken the trouble to reveal Himself, and yet not have insured that what He said should be beyond dispute? Some machinery to secure this clear and undoubted declaration must surely have been provided, and can surely be found.

Ah! so fair and strong the familiar argument sounds. It chimes in so freely with our natural anticipation. It has, on its side, all our irritation, our impatience, our misery, at the prolonged hesitation which seems to defeat our best hopes.

And yet there rings in it still the rejected refrain of those Jews who thronged about the Lord in Solomon's Porch: "How long wilt Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly."

That appeal, however pathetic, is never answered. It cannot be answered. For it has mistaken the nature of the authority to which it appeals.

Let us make no such blunder. The authority which Jesus claims over us is to quicken, dignify, and enlarge our faculties by our submission to it. And this can only be when the authority He wields is one that springs out of the affinity of a personal union. "My sheep hear My voice." If we are His sheep, "one with Him," made over to Him, drawn to Him by secret kinship, then we shall understand His speech, and it will grow clearer and louder as we learn to listen.

"My sheep hear My voice." An inner correspondence interprets. So long as we stand outside, watching and waiting until some definite assertion compels our allegiance, He will simply move about in front of us, amid the crowds at the world's feast, and no plain words will fall from His lips disposing of all doubt.

But as we pass into His fold, as we yield to His quiet companionship, as we give ourselves to that strange confidence which He inspires, as we walk with Him in the paths of goodness and purity and love, as we take of His gifts, and lie under the guiding influence of His Spirit, slowly His personality, rooted as it is in our little inner love, grows and heightens

and expands. It begins to assume a form of majesty ; it discovers an awful abyss of hidden mystery ; it unveils a throne far above all names that are named ; it takes its great power, and reigns. Day by day that quiet voice in our ears, which has pierced us first by its tenderness of love, becomes more absolute in its regal authority over us. An imperative "Do this!" begins to lay its emphatic hold upon us ; and we do it. We must do it. There is no refusal possible.

"I am the Way, the Truth, the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." So the speech now comes to those who can hear—plain and clear enough, strong and precise. That which was obscure and doubtful drops off it. Passing, as it does, from heart to heart, interpreted by co-operating affection, it grows and grows upon the listening ear, until it is loud as the mighty thunderings that break out from under the everlasting throne. It becomes as a trumpet, speaking with us, filling earth and heaven with its voice: "I am Alpha and Omega; the first and the last. Amen. And I hold in My hand the keys of heaven and hell."

So it sounds, waxing exceeding loud, until we quake to hear it. And we, who began by lying on His bosom, as on the heart of a friend in the quiet upper chamber, we now fall at His feet as one dead! No more suspense. He is the Christ. It is plain enough. We bow down, we yield, we obey, we adore, we acknowledge no will but His, "Who is King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Here is the authority that we desire. Only such

an authority, beloved, cannot be had for the mere asking. It is an authority that gradually and slowly discloses to us its right; an authority which may have to be studied and learned and tested and trusted and loved, before its supremacy is plain. A whole life is no long time to spend in apprehending its speech,—if only, at the end of the difficult discipline, the voice grows ever clearer which declares, “I came forth from God, and am come into the world; and again I leave the world, and go unto the Father;”—if only at the end we can answer with the twelve, “Lo, now speakest Thou plainly, and speakest no parable: now we are sure that Thou knowest all things. By this we believe that Thou camest forth from God.”

SERMON VII.

THE DEMAND FOR RESULTS.

“ Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”—ISA. lx. 1.

WE hear much of speculation and intellectual difficulties which are tormenting the faith that is in us. And that man would be a fool who would attempt to deny or diminish their pressure or their anxiety. Yet it may be well to remember that such speculative difficulties are, with most of us, not so much the causes as the signals of a disturbance that already exists. They are signs that faith is already in trouble, has already lost its proper confidence in itself. If it were in sound and vigorous health, it would be but faintly conscious of the multitudinous problems that are always accompanying it, unsolved and impenetrable.

For faith is primarily a practice, not a speculative energy. It seats itself within the will rather than within the reason; its proper method of solving questions lies in going steadily forward by the vigour of its own inherent vitality, and in finding, by this process, that in action the questions solve themselves. And it has the right to adopt this rough-and-ready

method, just because its primary concern is not philosophy, but moral conduct; and it is, therefore, not essentially called upon to satisfy all the demands of the inquiring intellect.

But if once its own practical capacity to advance is lowered, then the questions that ever beset its path do not get worked off. The success of the counsel *solvitur ambulando* ceases. The problems, therefore, are no longer brushed aside; they remain and block the road. The energy that of old would have moved forward in spite of them is now sick and weak, and it stands still; and, as it faces the black, unmoving menace of the opposing problems, it is staggered. Their pressure, their vividness, their terror, tell upon it as they never told before. It grows daunted, bewildered, panic-stricken. Instead of stepping ever on, it hurries back to see if it cannot discover some final answer to its perplexity. Up and down it runs, to this book or to that, and nothing seems quite to meet its case; perhaps it gives up in despair; and it attributes it all to the speculative unrest of the age.

But the real secret lay in the lower tone which had crept over its original confidence of faith, and had so put it at the mercy of the intellectual dilemmas, which, indeed, are always more or less present, and which now start up into exaggerated significance only because the energy which held them of old at bay has lapsed.

Now, this lowered tone comes upon faith from difficulties in its own region; that is, in the region of moral practice and conduct. And it is these difficulties

which are, no doubt, in our own day so urgent and so alarming. For instance, one such difficulty has lately been sketched for us by a masterly hand. At the close of his book on "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture," Mr. Gladstone, with that moral weight which gives to his utterance an incomparable dignity, traces the peril of the hour to the overwhelming preponderance of material over spiritual interests, which has come about during his day through the immense development and enlargement of the material resources of life. Now, such a cause as that tells directly upon faith; for it shifts the balance of the motive by which action is determined; it distorts the co-ordination of principles to which the will is sensitive; its poison works and penetrates behind the main grounds and assumptions of our nature to which faith makes its appeal. And no wonder that, with its springs thus running low, with its forces already drained, faith has not the heart to move out in the face of the swarming speculative questions which threaten its advance.

And among the moral causes that are thus laying belief open to the attack of intellectual inquiry, I know of none that more widely and more deeply undermines our spiritual courage than the contrast between the splendour of the promises of Christianity and the poverty of their actual realization.

Here we stand in Epiphany—the beautiful season in which we look to celebrate the manifested issues of the wonderful birth on Christmas Day. It has all happened; "God is with us." No greater event can

ever transcend this; there can be no other Whom we can look to see coming. Now, then, let the manifestation begin. Let the good news be felt abroad, be heard far and wide. Let us watch it breaking out on every side. That is our hope, our cry, "Arise, shine!" The light is come, is here; the glory of the Lord is risen. Let the whole earth brighten under the broadening day! That is our Epiphany expectation; and it is this which is hit so hard nowadays. It is this which is suffering so severe a rebuff—this natural demand, sanctioned by the feast that we celebrate, for broad, positive, encouraging, immediate results.

Results! The very word strikes so loud and ready a chord in our modern hearts. It is an age which clamours for results—quick and undeniable results. Here in England we always are profoundly susceptible to that commercial, practical cry. But of late the cry has taken a more sensitive and pathetic shape. For it is not now confined to the Philistine class, to whom positive results are the sole standard of work. It is the main mass of men of brains and men of culture which has for the last ten years more and more dropped away in weariness from theoretical wranglings, and even from the ideal interests of philosophy, and has turned all its keener interests into the practical problems that modern society has so violently raised. Here is our task, it feels. It cares not at all for the terrible wars that redoubtable champions still wage in stray reviews over the speculative relations of science and religion. It wonders and smiles at the

passion of the professors who attack, at the solemnity of the theologians who defend. The fury of the fray comes to us now as the faint echo of some old dream. Men have left all that behind. They want to get on; to learn what to do, and how to win the power to do it. Before them, in their sight, in their imagination, are ever pressing the multitudes who need help. Night and day the question is ringing in their ears, What path is it along which all are travelling? Whither does it lead? Are we in the right track at all, or have we, in the mass, wandered sheer out of the way? This is the living and urgent impulse of the hour. Men feel themselves caught in a critical moment of social history; they see that everything will turn on the direction that is taken by society in these present years. All must put their best stuff into the determination of that direction. The task of the day is work on behalf of our fellow-men in this crisis of their fate.

So they deeply feel; and wistfully, very wistfully, under this pressure for action, for amelioration, they turn their eyes towards that Church of Christ which certainly meets them at this point with large and ready promises. Will it not, at least, show them the way to do what is so sorely needed? If they cannot get home inside all its dogmatic creed, may they, nevertheless, not find in it the pivot round which to make this beneficent work turn? May they not lend themselves to its practical service, and be set by it to their humanitarian task?

So they are asking. And more! Has it not, they ask,

the store of strength which alone can feed and renew, and brace the failing motives of sympathetic philanthropy? Too well they are sensitive to the weakness of their own good instincts. Too well they know how quickly the glow languishes, the will flags, the hope sickens. Has not the Church a manifestation of power to offer them? Has it not the bread of life, the vigour of operating grace, of obvious efficacy, declaring itself abroad through the mightiness of its energy, so that all men can put it to the test—can taste and pronounce, here is the evidence of God's presence; here is the witness to the working of His Name?

It is such men as these that are asking, and most naturally, for the proofs of the Church's working efficiency; for the plain results which ought to follow from God being in its midst. And it is a very serious matter that, in answer to so natural and so pathetic a demand, they should encounter disappointment, and that the manifestation of power—the Epiphany—should seem to their expectation so strangely inadequate.

Not that there is not a good deal of result to show—more, much more, probably, than they who watch from outside are likely to suspect, or have the opportunity to gauge. You and I, who are inside, know many and many a spot, up and down this wilderness of sorrowful brick, where most tender and beautiful work goes forward in quiet confidence, in patient zeal; and wherever it does so, it wins its due reward, it has its comforting Epiphany, it verifies its mission;

the promises in no degree fail. Yes! we know well that, though the prophetic passion of the despondent onlooker has swept over it without notice, yet the signs are abroad—"the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the poor have the gospel preached to them."

Still, allowing for all this, it remains that there are huge areas of social and economic life which seem to lie wholly outside the range of Christ's work. Commerce, trade, property—these have entire departments which are ruled throughout by principles and habits which the Name of Christ has not yet touched, and can never sanction. Political and other changes, affecting deeply the well-being of our nation, travel along paths which are utterly independent of Christian influence. We seem often to be watching a society which goes on its way, creating its own story, just as if Christ were not here at all as a Power, or an Ideal, or a Goal. We miss the evidence of His dominant control over the affairs and doctrines of civilized man; and, in our dismay at this lack of evidence, we may be tempted to listen to a dark suspicion; to ask, Can it be that Christ had not anticipated the developments which society is taking? Is His Church powerless to cope with the new situation? or else, why is it so slow in understanding it, in handling it, or in grappling with its obstacles? Has the work got beyond its capabilities? Where is the manifestation of its victory?

Now, those are very serious and perilous questions, which touch our belief far more intimately than

the speculative doubts of which only the very few to whom philosophy is a reality feel the strain. Such doubts only affect the average man by hearsay or second hand. But the jar between the hopes of truth and its practical realization disturbs every one who has a heart. It is here that we need seriously to deal with our trembling belief.

And, dear brethren, do not suppose for a moment that the answer to our perplexity can be a light or easy one. For the questions we have asked are just those which carry us deep into the heart of the mystery of the Incarnation. By diving deep we can, indeed, see how closely the present problem is bound up with all that we mean by redemption. But, in realizing that, we shall realize also the seriousness and the profundity of the work which God proposed to Himself when He sent His Son to take upon Him our flesh. We shall begin to apprehend its scale, its range, its thoroughness; and so learn the vastness of the periods through which alone it can move to its fulfilment.

Let us attempt, briefly, to recall the method of redemption proposed in Christ, and then see whether it does not somewhat relieve our present disappointment.

The method springs from the central principle that, wherever personality is in question, all possibility of renovation must of necessity come from within. No person can be reformed, remade, from without. A *thing* can be broken up, if it is spoilt, and made again. But in the region of personality

this is impossible, for it would destroy that which makes personality what it is, *i.e.* undivided continuity of existence. A corrupted human race, then, must recover itself. No one can do that for it and from outside, not even God Himself. It must bring about its own moral recovery. It can indeed be assisted by outside influences, but no such assistance would create a renewal of character in one whose will was bad or awry. From within that will itself the renovating force of healthy action must spring, which alone can turn external assistance to good account. Therefore it was that, in obedience to this necessity, God must become Man, in order that man may, by God's grace, work out his own renewal. It must be man himself who does it from out of the resources of his own will. Into the very heart of man this new power of willing was introduced by Jesus Christ—the power to renovate itself, to cast out its own corruption, to expel its own disease, to build up the new man. Man is now endowed with the capacity to work out his own redemption. That one Will is strong enough to do it all. But still the old rule stands; it can only achieve what it has to do through other wills, within which it can embed itself, and restore to them their strength, and breed in them the freedom of health. Its only way of spreading its own healing light is by creeping from will to will, wherever it can get an entrance, so that each separate personality may, one by one, win the power to remake its own character through Christ Which strengthens it, and so the main mass be permeated and purged.

Now, this we all know perfectly well. We are always saying it. Yet surely we forget to apply it to our present troubles; for if we genuinely held it we could never dream of any sudden and speedy rectification of vast human wrongs. How could we? The vaster they are, the deeper they are, the slower must be the process of recovery, if it is to come from within the wrong itself. Christ, we say, by planting His own sinless Will down in the heart of the wrong, endows it with the power to cure itself—that is our Christian assertion. But for a wrong to learn to cure itself, to put itself straight, to find in itself a way back to peace,—ah, alas! that is a work that takes a weary time indeed! Sadly long, sadly slow, will be the discipline of bitter experience by which the right, now hidden within the wrong, will at last yield itself to the up-pushing grace of Christ's redemption, and clear itself of its encumbrance of error, and move up into its redeemed condition, disentangled and recovered and free.

And, if this be the law, what form of manifestation should we expect such a process to put forth? What would be the method of its Epiphany? Surely it would always repeat its first start. What was the start? Christ was the Start—Jesus Christ, a single point of unsullied light inserted within the weight of darkness; a single spot in all human nature seized, secured, held like a fortress, where the curative force of God could be lodged safe from all attack. The human body of Jesus Christ—that white point of light, that fortress spot held for God within

the darkened mass,—was a pledge and a security to God that the whole mass could yet be penetrated and redeemed, just because it now holds within itself the power to work out its own salvation. It was a pledge, a prophecy, a security! Yes; but all the slow process of penetrating the mass of the darkness has yet to be accomplished; and that process can only proceed by the gradual multiplication of these points of light. The Will of Christ must make itself ever new lodgments within the separate wills and bodies of men and women who yield Him admission; and in each, wherever He arrives and secures Himself a house, He becomes a new point of light. A new spot is seized and held for God. Point by point, spot by spot, He will creep and creep over the whole ground of night; but nowhere can He pass, except where men will yield Him free entry; for into the very core of their wills He must insert Himself, if ever He is to endow them with the energy and capacity of self-renewal.

Such must be the process. And its manifestation, therefore, will take the form, not of wholesale sweeps of victory over large areas, but rather of white points of light that will start out here and there, like sudden stars at night, in unexpected places, far apart, while between them the black deeps abide unbroken.

Now, this is the significance of “saints,” of which the Church has made so much. Christ works out His great achievements through single saints. This is the law of His Epiphany. And these saints, so alone, so distinct, so unique, are not what they are for them-

selves alone. God forbid! They are not separate atoms, of special privilege, snatched out of an evil world which they leave to its penal burning. Nay! rather, they are God's approved method of arriving inside the fallen evil world to which these saints belong. They are the lodgments seized for Himself by Christ, within the blind lump which He has to redeem—the rare and the favourable lodgments which have yielded Him entry, and which He turns into fortresses and refugees for His grace. In each He wins for Himself a fresh spot of vantage. In each He lights His beacon, He trims His lamp; and so, each becomes a new pledge to God of the great possibility ever ahead, when, by slow capture of point after point, the entire depth of night may be occupied and filled; and the points may grow nearer and thicker, until their lights may at last touch and mingle across the black intervals that divide them; and the light itself may cease to be broken up into separated stars, and may become the broad diffused glow of perfect day. So it may be at last, we pray. But yet, point by point, it must happen. That is the only way. From spot to spot Christ must creep. That is all we ought to look for now. That should be the type of the Epiphany. If we win that, we should have our proper proof that the work was going forward. Having that, we should be content to wait, in hope and prayer, through the night, until the day dawn and the shadows flee away.

Now, my brethren, I would ask you seriously whether that is not the kind of manifestation which

we do encounter in our day. Do we not witness some such process going on under our eyes? Huge blocks of dirty and tumbled matter, no doubt, there are; whole areas of social perplexity, of confused knowledge, whose riddle we cannot read, whose secret no one is able to master. Yes; but again and again are we not startled by bright spots that leap out amid the gloom? Suddenly, at some dark and neglected corner, out of which all hope of Christ, all signs of faith, had disappeared, there is a gleam, a flash, a quiver. Some strong heroic soul, loyal to its Lord, has laid hands on the troubles of poverty at this or that particular spot; he has brought Christ's light to bear on the blackness; he has grappled with the social tangle; he has broken through the barriers of despair; he has given Christ's truth, whole and full, to the poor; and He has devoted His own life, in unstinted sacrifice, to make good the gift. And lo, just there, all problems solve themselves. The classes that stood apart, are there fused in amity. Christ is felt to have a direct message to give to the working man of to-day. The poor apprehend the message which before seemed to them but an old forgotten song in an unknown tongue. The hungry sheep look up, and find themselves fed by living Bread; they crowd round the altar with fervour, for they feel it to be their own; their hearts ring to its high language; they are at home in the sanctuary of God. Such Epiphanies as these we are not wholly without.

Or, again, amid the babel of new knowledge, of scientific and antiquarian discovery, of critical discus-

sion—just when we all are losing our heads, and getting dazed and dumbfounded, does it not happen that some single, simple genius breaks out upon us unawares; some one like Asa Gray, the quiet beautiful soul, who caught up from the first the significance of Darwinism; some one clear and humble as a little child in His hold on the Lord Jesus, who, far from struggling to resist and fight off this novel knowledge, passes wholly inside it, and takes up all its perplexed material, and flashes a sudden light of quiet interpretation, which shows us Christ still present and dominant in the heart of all that is most new, as well as of all that is most old?

Or, again, amid the blinding storm which is besetting the primal principles of social morality, are we not even now startled to recognize the deep force of Christ's supremacy over the entire secret of purity and of marriage? Amid the wreckage of conventionalisms His light seems to recover its full sway; it becomes steadier to our eyes; we begin to perceive how intimately our upgrowth has been rooted in His Name alone; how our moral standards have been created and vitalized by His authoritative Word. And others, as well as we, are learning this; others, of whom we should never have expected it. With a rush it has come over us that if we are to uphold our present ideal in marriage we must be ourselves upheld in Christ; and a new sense of Christ's living energy in the world breaks out upon us as we discover how much depends upon His Name which He had, perhaps, assumed to be natural,—as we discover how impossible is our

recovery of the ground from which we have been lapsing, except under the inspiration of His faith.

Such Epiphanies as these are going on all round us. Points of light start out amid the night like stars that pledge to us the morning sun. Look up at them and watch them; listen to their message; though they move out upon our sight as it were in silence, yet there are voices to be heard among them, voices that pass from one to another and whisper that all is well. The Lord is with us; He is securing to Himself even now the world from which He seemed to have dropped out. Here and there signals break out which declare the persistence of His work. Those that have eyes to see may see; and seeing, they may wait and pray and possess their souls in patience.

For, indeed, such Epiphanies as these recall and repeat the old Epiphanies of the birth which these Sundays set before us. What were those Epiphanies? What were they but little spots of signal light that flashed upon the night their comfortable message, and then were gone? Was it the brief, abrupt appearance out of the dim vastness of the slumbering East of three scholars, whose remote studies had led them to the Babe born in a manger? What more strange and unlooked for than this solitary wonder! Out of what consecrated industry had they arrived at the discovery? What news did they carry back to their far home? What light broke into the mysteries of Chaldean wisdom? No one tells. Enough that just one point of the Gentile learning felt anew its Lord, and bowed the knee and gave the gift. Now all heathen wisdom

is pledged to God by that single deed; it will come, it will journey hither. Give it time; wait, watch, and pray. The pledge remains; God will not forget it nor ignore it; He has made His claim, it shall be ratified. Some day, in the schools of the temple, amid the doctors, Christ shall stand, the Light of the world, and every nook and corner of those dim galleries shall be flooded with the knowledge of God. In the strength of that pledge given we are asked to wait and watch and pray.

Or, once again, was it the latent power of His presence at a wedding-feast? Just once a thrill passed round, and the water quivered, and the powers worked, and men drank of a new wine where they looked for none; just once, and no more, and few noticed it; only a servant or two knew whence it was drawn; but let that be enough; that is the true Epiphany, says the Church; it is enough, for it holds in it the promise and the potency of a certain Hereafter, where all social feasts shall be transfigured and knit anew in Him Who alone can loosen and bind and quicken and hallow.

Such shall be our Epiphany; such stars we shall see here and there in our Eastern sky. Let them suffice. The sign has been given; the prophecy shall be fulfilled. Let us wait and pray in patience, in cheerful, humble loyalty, possessing our souls in peace.

SERMON VIII.

DOGMA.

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."—
GAL. vi. 14-16.

THIS vehemence, this emotion of St. Paul, is not always intelligible to us. We see that he is facing some dreadful odds; that he is hard pressed, as one who fights for his very life. He wrestles and strives; he warns, beseeches, argues, invites, threatens. Often his zeal, his anxiety, his eagerness, break through all the barriers of speech, and the grammar collapses under the pressure of the crisis. An issue terribly momentous is being decided; that is certainly clear: and St. Paul is risking the whole weight of his personal authority in the struggle; he is forced to drag out the secrets of his inner life, to go through the indignity of self-assertions and self-apologies, as the fury of the battle rages round his person. We can recognize that in the ring of the phrases, "Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not;" "I say again, let no man think me a fool; if otherwise,

yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little;" "Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly;" "I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also;" "I would they were cut off which trouble you!" So fierce is the fray. And yet the motive of it all is perhaps vague and indistinct to us. What is it that St. Paul is asserting with such violence? What is the peril that he so passionately dreads? Why is it so terribly urgent? We have been told, perhaps, the position of the Judaizers against whom he protests in the Epistle to the Galatians. We have a dim recollection of having once tried to remember what were the tenets of the Gnostics whom he is opposing at Colossæ. But why did it involve such a tremendous effort? Why these outbursts; why this heat?

Yes! So we are apt to say, just because the position for which St. Paul was warring with such dogged persistence is one with which we have grown up as a natural and obvious assumption which it would be senseless to dispute. It is a position which eighteen hundred years of history have made good. It is not easy for us to understand the difficulty of arriving at its first complete assertion. What is that position? It is the absoluteness of Christianity. Christ, if He is anything at all, is absolute. He stands alone. He cannot make terms with other spiritual chiefs. If He claims any one soul, He must claim all; His work must be catholic in its scope. It is bound to displace all rival creeds. It stands on

its own inherent truth, all-sufficient, self-centred, self-developing. This *we* see easily enough. It is a Christian commonplace. But, believe me, it was a tough truth to get grip on at the first, and it needed a keen eye and a dauntless heart to detect and to face all that it involved. Even the most loyal of the simpler believers would be perplexed and hesitating, as the challenges which such a faith roused poured in thick and fast, or as the friendly compromises pressed in on all sides, to solicit their adherence. It would indeed have been so easy for the faith of Christ to have taken its place in the world as one religion among many. Any slight lapse from its full and distinct demands would have involved this possibility. That was the danger, of which we hardly now can realize the force; and it was against this that St. Paul, with His indomitable force and his intense spiritual sagacity, spent himself in untiring war.

There were *two* especial forms which this danger took; and what made the situation so critical was that the two made their attack upon the central position from exactly opposite sides; so that as fast as the Apostle had repelled one onset, he had to face right round and meet the counter-assault. No wonder that such a double contest, the full fury of which, from whatever side it came, fell still on him, taxed his vital energies, and strained his intellectual resources, and bruised his sensitive spirit, until again and again he desired to be taken away from this cruel strife, and to be with Christ at peace, which were far better.

The peril, in the form in which he met it in this

Epistle to the Galatians, comes from the Judaizers. The special points in dispute were, as we know, matters of legal ritual and custom—questions of meats and drinks, of keeping the sabbath, of circumcision. These may seem small matters; but the deep issue really at stake, in the bitter fray that raged round these battle-cries, was whether Christianity should ever disentangle itself from the Jewish environment within which it took its rise. This was the crucial question to be decided, and such a question was vital to the very existence of the faith. It is only by recognizing this that we can enter into the intensity of the interests involved, and can appreciate the passion of the Apostle.

It might have been so natural, considering the circumstances of its origin, that Christianity should have limited itself to being a purified revival of the ancient prophetic movements under the Law. It itself looked so like an enlarged and stronger development of the work of the Baptist, who had revived the prophetic office. Begun by him, it had been carried forward by the Greater than he Who came after him, as an expansion of his baptism. This Messiah had taken up the revival at the point where he left it, and had given it a world-wide character. World-wide! Yes; but world-wide in the sense of extending the privileges of the ancient law to all nations. This was what the prophets had mostly foretold—that the Gentiles should take hold of the skirts of one who was a Jew; that the peoples of the earth should all crowd to Jerusalem, to the courts of Zion. The old Covenant still was to hold good, only it was to be carried forward to its

consummation by a Messiah, Who should make it avail for all; Who should lift it into universal dominance; Who should draw all men under its majesty and its mercy. So many who believed in Jesus read His message; and text after text from the Scriptures would tally with this interpretation; vision after vision from the prophets would confirm it.

And so much that was instinctive and heartfelt would be enlisted in the service of such a conception. This ancient Law had the hallowing of God Himself upon it; how could it vanish? It had the sanction of Christ's own example in His life on earth; how could it be abandoned? It was dear and near to the holy people of whom Christ came after the flesh—dear and near as their very life-blood; how could they surrender it? Surely they are not to lose, by faith in a Messiah, the sweet and comely decencies of habit and food and dress, to which they clung with the whole force of an unconquerable patriotism! Surely they would keep the feasts that Jesus kept—those immemorial sabbaths, those blessed Passovers, which they loved with the intense devotion which only religious folk can feel for the sacred customs which have been theirs from their earliest childhood!

So much could be pleaded, so strongly could the case be argued, so deep was the appeal! Yet what it meant, at the root, was just one thing, and that was deadly. It meant that Christianity had no absolute basis of its own, but was a development of Judaism. It stood on the Law; there was its foundation, its authority, its backbone. Christ was the highest and noblest of the

ministers of the old Covenant, but He was still its Servant. He was under it, not over it; its Prophet, not its Lord.

And, again, the Law, divine as it was, was still the Covenant with *one* chosen people. It might admit all the nations within its doors, but only on the condition of their becoming Judaized—of their conforming to the life and habit and story of a separate people. The opening of the gospel to the Gentiles involved, according to this, the universal spread of Judaism—of the Mosaic Law; that is, of a Law given to a single nation, with its national peculiarities, its separate history. Just as Mohammedanism is open to all, but at the price of their being Arabianized—of adopting a fashion of life which is only intelligible and justifiable as the hereditary life of Arabs—so, in a far higher sense, it would have been with the Messianic offer to the nations, if it had been such as the Judaizers would have made it. And Christianity would, therefore, have had on it the stamp of particularity, of tribalism, of limitation. All might have entered it, but only at the price of surrendering to Semitic supremacy.

Here, then, were two fatal flaws in this conception. Christianity would have been partial; therefore not catholic. It would have sprung from a root that was not its own, and therefore it would not have been absolute, not self-developing, not creative. Therefore it was that St. Paul declaimed and thundered against minute ritual customs which might seem half innocent—mere tolerable weaknesses to be gently handled. Listen to him! At no price will he accept a com-

promise. He scents the ultimate disaster. "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" "Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am." "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." "Christ is become of no effect unto you." "Ye are fallen from grace."

So he fought through against the snare of Judaism. And then, on the Gentile side, the same temptation was being plied, though in such a different shape. As the Church crept out of its Jewish shell, and learned to throw in its lot, with increasing boldness, with the Greek population that thronged the cities of the empire, it found itself in greater danger from the eager welcome with which it was admitted into the circles of the speculative theosophies than it was from the hostile rushes of panic-stricken heathen mobs. Under direct attack, it always braced itself and grew firmer; but it was more or less bewildered by the open-armed embraces of these clever friends. We perhaps remember the situation. There was so much about, in the world of the day, of religious intellectualism; such eager variety in the efforts to discover a rational solution of spiritual perplexities. Philosophy had

taken a religious form, or else religion had donned the philosopher's cloak. There was a whirl of speculative talk, of fervid mysticism. And all of it spent its strength in reconciling the relations of the world to God, and of God to the world. All of it turned round the problem of evil, and the deliverance from its fetters. The language of redemption, of reconciliation, of initiation was in the air, was on every lip. Emanations, incarnations, mystic feasts, and baptisms,—these were familiar enough. And, according to the eclectic mind of the prevailing philosophy, there was no difficulty whatever,—rather there was a positive ease,—in welcoming one more manifestation of the divine secret, one more aspirant to spiritual authority. And Christianity would have many points of alliance with the conceptions and the phrases which formed the common stock-in-trade of all these manifold philosophical revivals. It would fall easily in with their anticipations, and they would set to work to adopt it, and to assimilate it, and to rationalize it, with the ready zest and the tolerant freedom such as we meet in a Calcutta baboo of the present day. The cool halls of Roman villas would be just as pleasantly flattered by this novel emanation of Oriental fantasy as a London drawing-room over the last American colonel who has embraced esoteric Buddhism.

Now, here was an unexpected and most insidious peril. This primitive Church, with its few simple people rescued from their sins through the sacrifice of Christ, how would it keep its footing in the confusing excitement of such a greeting? It found itself

suddenly an object of interest to the clever, the learned, the educated classes. Speculative problems, which it had never mastered, were being put to it to answer. Eager questioners were determined to have an explanation. Ay, and more than questioners; they were ready with their own explanations. They were delighted with the new material that was offered to their handling; they saw in it one more example of their favourite theories; they set themselves to assimilate it to their own presuppositions. They were fast settling down on it, like a swarm of flies.

Such were the people whom we sweep up under the general term "Gnostics." And it is against this theosophical movement that St. Paul comes to the rescue of the infant Church. Just as the Judaizers would have made Christianity an appendage, a purified development of the Law, so these gnostic theosophists would have made it a mere appendage of the Greek speculative theologizing. They would have dragged it into the rout of Oriental mystics. It would have taken its place as one among the many forms in which the Divine Father had clothed His revelation of Himself.

But this faith in Christ is nothing if it is not absolute and alone. It cannot confuse itself with any parallel manifestation of God. It can assimilate, but it cannot be assimilated. Its rational explanation of itself cannot be taken from a centre outside it. It must spring wholly from within. So far as it is to be explained, it must explain itself; no one else can supply it with an interpretation drawn from sources over which it has not got control. Christ is absolutely unique;

His authority, His mind, His purpose, His work, all are self-dependent, self-concentrated, self-sufficient. It is not Greek philosophy that will explain Him, but He Who will explain Greek philosophy. He stands over it, not under it; just as He stood over the Law, not under it. That is the vital distinction. In the difference between these two positions lies the question between the life or the death of the Christian faith. And therefore St. Paul cannot rest from his urgency of warning. ¹ "Beware lest any man spoil you through the philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world; and not after Christ." "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a . . . worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen." "Christ is the Head; in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." ² "My speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." In the possession of this Spirit they have that with which they can boldly face and hold aloof these intellectual patronizers, who cow them by their cleverness. In this Power they are independent of all help. "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." "But the natural man receiveth not the

¹ Col. II. 8, etc.² I Cor. II. 4, etc.

things of the Spirit of God : . . . neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." ¹ "O Timothy, keep that which is committed unto thee, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of the knowledge that is falsely so called."

Thus St. Paul argued and fought, and thus he became the instrument by which the Church was rescued from the peril of attaching herself, parasitically, either to Judaism or Gentilism. He taught her that her authoritative stability lay solely in herself—in her living Lord; that in Him she possessed an absolute base, rendering her independent of all conditions and supports. In the secure strength of this base, and guided and moved by the Holy Spirit, she could issue out to assimilate all the material supplied her by human life and thought; but she could never subordinate herself to any interpretation or authority other than her own. She alone could explain her own mind, or speak on her own behalf.

And, my brethren, it is good for us to remember on Trinity Sunday that it is this right of self-interpretation which is embodied in what we call "dogma." Many of us do not see the need of "dogma," just because we are but too apt to miss the true seat of Christian stability and authority. We suffer this to become disguised. And this deception is easy enough; for the Christian faith is not afraid to enter frankly into the thick of this human world. It spreads itself about hither and thither, as an influence, a tone, as a moral force, a spiritual temper. It creeps down, in

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 20.

this guise, deep within the body of social life; it becomes a quickening pressure, acting as one among the many agencies that animate and impel the ever-growing story of man. So it works secreted, as leaven in the lump. But if once you are tempted by this to treat it as nothing but an influence—one among many influences, perhaps the best and sweetest, but still only a moral force working in concert with other forces, receiving its colour from them, as they from it—then you will find yourself pulled up short by something in it which is assertive, independent; a hard core which resists all attempts to dissipate it; something that refuses analysis and assimilation, and claims an absolute title to original and unique authority. It will not fuse itself with its environing conditions; it holds off, aloof, supreme, solitary.

Now, what is it, this unyielding kernel of truth which repels dissolution—this strong and sturdy foundation, self-centred, self-contained? We know well. It is the personality of the Lord Jesus—His authoritative personality, with its paramount claims. This it is which accounts for the permeating influence over the world by Christianity, but which itself is not an influence, but a self-concentrated spring of original energy—a living Will, having its life in itself; accountable only to itself in God; answerable to itself; intelligible only by virtue of its own inner light; rejecting all interpretation from without; incomparable with any other; enthroned in pre-eminent dominion, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named.

This is the heart and core of Christianity, by which alone it persists, endures, conquers. And the language by which it asserts this, its inner secret, is dogma. Dogma simply puts into words this indissoluble and unique element which makes it impossible to account for Christianity as an appendage or a development of something else. Dogma declares that Christianity has its origin in itself alone; that the Person of its Lord and Master holds in it all that is wanted to explain its rise, its growth, its power, its demands, its promises. Christ is, in Himself alone, Christianity. "Christ, to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness;" but to all who believe, Christ, the sole Foundation, the Author and Finisher of the Faith, the one Head, the one Rock,—“Christ the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God.” That wisdom, that power, may make themselves felt as an influence, acting within the throng of agencies that make history. But if it were only that influence, it would not have a dogmatic creed. It has a creed, because, if you turn and examine this influence, your analysis of it must land you at last face to face with this direct and downright challenge, “Whom say you that I, the Son of man, am?” and because that challenge, once faced, can only be met in the words of the Creed.

This danger, brethren, against which St. Paul fought with might and main is on us again under novel disguises. In its simpler form it sweeps in upon us through the mere width and variety of our travelling. Our tours now take us easily far outside the frontiers of Christianity; we rub shoulders with a dozen re-

ligions; we grow familiar with Eastern faiths—ancient, dignified, immense; and, by sheer force of unguarded instinct, Christianity slips into a subordinate place in our imagination. We let it appear as one among the world-religions, peculiar to a certain district, a Western habit, a social and hereditary influence. We talk as if it had grown as the others grew; it has as many affinities with them as it has contrasts. Its rites, its forms, are curiously allied to theirs. Its sacraments, its creeds, are the common property of all religion; they can be accounted for out of human nature; they can be given their historical pedigree. We may still regard it as better than any other religion; we may not be the least prepared to surrender its claim to be the highest point in the series. But this is a matter of degree, or of argument, or of fancy. Anyhow, it takes its place in the line of natural development. It hangs on to the rest. So we easily picture it. And the picture tells upon us, until all sense of a peculiar significance, of supreme validity in Christianity, dies out of us. And when once this has happened, then, of course, dogma must seem simply ridiculous. For this condition of mind, such as I have described it, which comes over the traveller, has already surrendered unconsciously the very core of the faith, *i.e.* the unique and solitary pre-eminence of Jesus Christ. And it is because it has already made this unconscious surrender, that it comes up against the assertiveness of dogma with such a shock of repugnance. For dogma is the plain assertion that in Christ lies an authority, a validity, a force, a sanction,

which stands quite alone, with which nothing else is comparable. This is all that dogma asserts; and what St. Paul spent his life in declaring was, that Christianity can never say less than that.

And, again, every one of us here at home, without travelling at all, is terribly liable to the habit of letting Christianity sink down to the level of a social influence. We view it subjectively; we watch and perhaps warmly approve its effects. It does so much good, and does it better than mere philanthropy. All this we see, and we justify it; we feel what a loss to the general well-being it would be if it were withdrawn. It serves to bind society together; it stirs and encourages the better motives. We feel that we ourselves are the better for the general influence it has had over us. All this is so true; we observe it as a phenomenon which impresses us favourably. And never once, perhaps, have we gone behind the phenomenon, the appearance, the effect, and asked ourselves, "Whence does it spring, this excellent influence? What does it assume? what does it assert? Does it spring solely out of a belief that is positive and dogmatic—a belief that in Christ Jesus there is to be found an authoritative supremacy, which demands nothing short of absolute personal allegiance of heart to heart, of will to will? Is that the base of this influence? is that the motive-cause of these effects; and if so, what am I about? Can I accept and approve the influence, and not face the challenge of the Creed?"

"Whom sayest thou that I, the Son of man, am?"
There is the challenge. On Trinity Sunday we must

up and face it. The Creed is proclaimed aloud ; we have heard it. What are we going to say? A Face, a Presence, a Life, a Will, stands over against us with the importunate inquiry. Oh that with St. Peter our hearts may burn within us, until like a flame the strong and passionate words break out through our lips, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" God grant that to-day, by the help of the Spirit, lifted, taught, impelled by that which fell at Pentecost and is now at work in our souls, we may deliver out our truth with a new emphasis, a new form of conviction! "Yes, it is true; I see it. 'Thou art the Christ, the Holy One of God.'"

SERMON IX.

LIFE'S PURPOSE.

“According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—EPH. iii. 11.

A PURPOSE! That is, most certainly, what we all need. No man or woman can be at their best until they have found a purpose in life. At first, no doubt, in growing years, if men are in circumstances where leisure is allowed them, they may look round upon this world in which they find themselves simply for the sheer pleasure of seeing it, simply to taste its experiences, simply to discover what it has to say to them. They may be content just to look, to hear, to feel, to admire, to know. This is the peculiar and proper joy of youth, just to make experiments. Would that all our young were given the opportunity to enjoy this their bountiful inheritance!

But after a time, even when all is most favourable, a secret restlessness begins to give warning that this period of experiences is bound to close. It is discovered to be but a tentative, preliminary period—a light skirmishing before the serious work is taken in hand. A sterner stress must be obeyed. Something from

within forbids an indefinite lingering within the enchantments of irresponsible youth. A voice grows upon the inner ear, repeating with insistence, "Sweet, indeed, it is to look on all things with an equal eye; to be glad to touch and taste and pass on. But you may not dally or delay in this happy fairy-land. This is but the dream of what life might be; but the day draws on fast, when life itself must make a beginning. Life is no dreamy enjoyment of manifold experiences. Life is an affair of the will; life is action; life is labour; life is effort; life is consecration; life is sacrifice. To live, you must make a choice out of all that has been proffered to you. You must determine in what direction you will act. What, then, is your choice? Whither will you turn your steps? Not all the pleasant paths are open to you. You cannot go down them all. You must choose one, and this means that you must abandon the others. Which shall it be? What will you set yourself to do? And what will you give up all hope of ever doing? Many, many things are good and fair and honourable; but you cannot keep them all. One for one, and one for another; but for each and all, a choice, a decision, to which they stand committed; for each, a purpose which they must bind themselves to fulfil. Be brave; be clear; look round; consider; weigh; and with a whole heart, choose."

That is the voice that should speak—the voice that all of us faintly recognize. True, it is no easy business to which it calls, for this world is a strange medley of confusion, and it is hard to sort ourselves. Circum-

stances hinder and imprison. And, for many of us, not one of all the roads open to men's actions may seem to offer a favourable opportunity. Either we are forced along by straitened means in some direction that we never chose; or, worst fate of all, we are too well off for it to matter what we choose, and are tempted to hang on in vague suspense, filling up our time with such daily littlenesses as society expects of us. But in any case, though we fail to see our way to move, we know well enough that we have missed something. We are conscious that we have never begun to be fully awake; we are still unfulfilled, so long as we have never yet arrived at any purpose in life to which we could surrender ourselves.

A purpose! Man, to be fully himself, must have a purpose. The one thing which he finds hopelessly inadequate is to be self-centred. So long as everything that he feels, or says, or does, turns round himself, and has himself for its pivot, he is uncomfortable, he is disquieted, he is sterile. He has missed the mark; he has blundered; he grows sick and miserable. He wants purpose.

A purpose! What is it that constitutes a purpose? What is its essential characteristic?

(1) It must be something older, deeper, stronger, than ourselves. That is our prime need. We ask of a purpose that it should shift the centre of gravity outside ourselves. It is ourselves that we want to escape; the weariness, the stupidity, the futile disappointment of self-service. We are born to serve something nobler than ourselves, born to engage in a

life older and vaster than our own. That is why we instinctively feel the necessity of passing under the pressure of some duty, some activity, to which we may stand committed, dedicated, yielded. The purpose that should fulfil us must be one that puts us to school. It must command us, make demands of us, control and sway us. It must ride over us like the moon above the tides, so that all that is in us swells or sinks, rises or retreats, obedient to the motions of this imperial guidance. It must have authoritative claim upon our time, upon our energy, upon our desires, so that we may regulate our days and hours by its calendar. It must introduce order and law into our aimless ways, into our shifting emotions, so that, by the measure of its requirements, we may know what we can afford to do, and what we must leave undone; what we may keep, and what we may throw aside. It must save us from the misery of indecisive indifference—the misery of feeling that it does not matter the least bit in the world what we do, or how and when we do it. It must lay hands upon us, and dispose of us, and fix our seasons, and give positive value to our time, and decree for us our profitable leisure, and reward or blame our measure of skill. It must fix for us a standard of judgment, a metre of force, a gauge of accuracy, by which to test and to prove our efforts.

(2) A purpose must wield authority over us. That, certainly, we ask of it. And yet, if it is to occupy us wholly and richly, it must root this authority deep down within the soil of our innermost being. It must claim

us by a living touch such as evokes in us the voluntary witness to its validity. We must be able to bear our witness to its worth, to set our seal to it that it is a true and vital purpose. We must be able to transport ourselves into it, to fuse ourselves with it, so that we and it become one undivided thing; and we can hardly say at last whether we have chosen it or it has chosen us.

For herein lies our human privilege, our peculiar prerogative, not indeed to create the world in which we are, but to find ourselves akin to it, able to reassert it, to corroborate it, to co-operate with it, to respond to it, to identify ourselves with it, to combine with it, even as if it had been indeed our very own creation. This is our freedom—the freedom of serving, not as slaves, but as sons; not as bowing under an external necessity, but as closing, in willing recognition and delight, with that which we obey, contributing to it our own momentum, our own joyful adherence, our own intelligent corroboration. This is our privilege as children of God. The particular purpose into which we throw ourselves is the special point in the world's immense domain, at which we find ourselves able to exercise this privilege.

This happy, this blessed privilege—we see now what it is. It is the privilege of discovering ourselves at one with Him Who made the world; the privilege of passing within the busy throng of His eternal activities; the privilege of moving within His larger, ampler movements—in the liberty of service, in the ardour of free companionship; fellow-workers with God in the husbandry of this vast vineyard, fulfilling a purpose

which is His and yet is ours. In discovering, in embracing such a purpose, we are lifted to a higher plane. We are caught up by it into the workshop where worlds are created. The rush and roar of the great looms of God are clanging round us, weaving the web of human history. And, in that tremendous action, we too, in our remote corner, are playing our little part; through our fingers the rapid threads go floating and mingling. Ah! the inspiration of it! We lift our eyes in grateful hope; we kindle and are aglow. Not in vain are we alive, blessed be God!

Such is purpose. You see that, through it, we have arrived at God. Yes, for the sense of having a purpose in our own life plants us down at once in a world that has order and meaning and consistency. It is our private and personal evidence that we and the world are made for each other, that we work within the limits of a common kinship. A purpose in life is the primary, practical proof to each man's experience, therefore, that there is a God, "the Maker of all things, in Whom all things consist."

And I would ask you, Does not the godlessness that now so universally pervades us spring from the unhappy purposelessness that is our present curse? Is not this the terror of the hour, that on every side there is a vanishing of all purpose? Take society at large: purpose, the sense of purpose, is disappearing out of this huge civilization of ours. Who professes to see any distinct, emphatic, growing purpose towards which modern society is moving? Who offers to detect a rational and coherent goal for these portentous accu-

ulations of human masses in great cities, for these gigantic manipulations of capital? What is the end we have in view? Who of the young men see visions, who of the old men dream dreams?

Socialism, it is true, and socialism alone, has the courage to prophesy, to detect purpose. It offers an interpretation which would, if it were proved, give coherence and significance to the moving drama as its scenes unroll. But, then, socialism is just what most men who call themselves sane and sober cannot away with. It proposes a moral ideal which the main mass of the educated classes pronounces incredible and remote. And so it remains true that more and more every year we still feel ever creeping forward, like a cold relentless tide over that which we call society, this despair of all social purpose. So little have we the heart to believe that mankind is engaged in working out a mighty task; that there is a Divine destiny underlying this human civilization, which is pushing on towards novel disclosures of social purpose; that God is carrying and lifting the entire body forward as in the days of old, through many disastrous failures, towards a gathering and increasing glory.

No, we hardly dream that Christian civilization holds in it any further secret; that there is any unveiling yet to be of the mystery of human brotherhood. Rather we feel as if we were watching on at the death-bed of an effete society. Wealth, perhaps, will go on growing, but poverty will grow with it. There is no visible end to the one or to the other. More money and more misery. A dismal prospect! We

can put no heart into such a picture. Enough for us if we can tide through the anxious evil days. Enough if we can make our own way along with caution and security. Enough if we can stave off any desperate social disaster. Enough if we can do something to palliate the inevitable sufferings and soften the terrible strain of the immediate hour. Enough for us if for our day, at least, society can still retain such fragments of its ancient structure as may suffice to keep it from going to pieces under our eyes. Is not that the mind of more than half the men we meet? Is there anything more definite, or encouraging, or uplifting in their social expectation? Ask yourselves! Do you look for anything much better to come out of the movements of modern Europe? Do you detect any purpose in them, any suggestion of a design, of a control, of a destiny? And if not, what can it mean but that the Hand of God, the Name of God, are for you unmeaning phrases so far as the life of mankind at large is concerned?

And is it much better in private—in the circuit of our personal existence? Is not the sense of purpose here too ebbing fast? Is it not the lack of purpose that is the secret of our depression? So few of us can find in our profession, whatever it be, anything better than a mere means of support. In the push, the thrust, the scramble, we have been driven to take up the first job that offered us a living. We have just contrived to slip into some corner of this enormous industrial machine; we are lucky enough to have gained that! It, at least, will serve our turn,

will keep us in bread and butter. It will, if we are very patient, permit us in the end to marry, and at last, perhaps, provide a decent pension for declining years.

Yes, this is something, but it is not a purpose. For still it leaves us asking, "What is it all for? What comes of it? What good does it do? To what end have we contributed? We are not born here on earth, primarily, that the world may feed and aid and warm us, but that we may feed and aid and warm the world. We need not only to be kept alive, but to devote our life to some larger and nobler use. We need something to which to be surrendered, to be dedicated. Fed, indeed, we must be; but, over and above this, there should be a living and lordly purpose bearing us along with it, reaching back behind our petty day, reaching on ahead beyond our brief stay; something high, good, true, helpful, that will endure when we are gone, and will, by so enduring, give permanence and worth to the little effort which we, in our passing hour, throw into its mighty working. There should be some high purpose to which all that we are contributes, with which it coalesces, by which it is dignified and transfigured. Without this dominant motive to hold all together, to interpret and to inspire us, our best manhood never emerges into action. All our exertions on behalf of our own livelihood, if they terminate there, if their horizons are closed, still leave us small, impoverished, unilluminated. We cannot revolve round our own centre without the languid weariness of a great futility stealing over us. Yet modern industrial life

refuses too often to do anything more for us than supply us with a means of getting along. It seems impossible to wring out of the dry routine of its innumerable offices, of its crowded clerkships, any hope that we by our labour are serving a great cause, that we are dedicate to the permanent welfare of humanity, according to the mind and counsel of God."

"According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord." How the message sweeps in to our relief! It lifts us like a breath of fresh air. There is a purpose, then—a real, living, positive, unfailing purpose. / A purpose of God's own, to which He holds, towards which He works, by which He steers. Amid all the bewilderment of history, through all the tangled distresses of man's social growth, God's Will holds on its way. He has a hope, fast and sure; He sees His goal. /

Here is the faith to which the Jew ever clung—faith in the eternal purpose. This is the Jew's prophetic gift, by which He discerned that all things must have an end—that all things must work together towards some good. He could not believe in One God, Lord of all, without believing that that God would give unity, consistency, coherence, to the entire body of fact. And man's own story could not but be part of that body of fact. It could not be that man alone, in all nature, tended nowhither, had no befitting destiny. Nay! for Him, above all, there must be a purpose. So the Hebrew heroes believed. They believed in a purpose. And they strained their sad eyes to see it. And they lifted themselves on high

watch-towers that they might catch its first dawn; and they listened, with anxious ears, through the black night. What shall it be? Is nothing seen? Is nothing heard? And sometimes the outlines started clear—the vision of a perfect King, in Whom all mankind was crowned, or of a Servant, in Whose meek loyalty the Will of God found flawless expression. And then again the clouds swept over it, and the darkness drowned it, and only the bitter cry escaped them, “Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, Thou Lord God of Abraham our Father.”

But they were right. But they were justified. God would not fail them. God did not deceive them. And at last one night it lay there—a tiny Child, laid in a manger. It is come; it is here! The purpose of God—that is it. Look at it. The eternal purpose in which all shall find a meaning. It is Jesus Christ, our Lord.

“Jesus Christ!” If He has been born, if He has taken our flesh, if He has risen, if He is at the right hand of God, then the story of man has not been in vain. For then it has been lifted past its present miserable and baffling entanglement. It has been carried forward on to a new level, into a world that is to come. Not here on earth is the close, is the end. Here we see but the birth, the travail-pangs of the new day. Bitter they are, those pains as of a woman in travail—bitter and terrible. No wonder we shrink appalled, we shudder, we grow sick and faint. Birth is always a terrible matter. But if it be a birth, indeed, then, be sure of it, a moment will yet

arrive at last in which we shall remember no more the anguish, for joy that a Man is born into the world—"the Man Christ Jesus," born into the new, the eternal world, born so that all we are reborn in Him.

Ah, shall we believe that? Shall we trust God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus? Shall we rely upon it, that, whatever the confusion and the trouble we see around us, that blessed Babe of God has taken it all upon Himself, and has made it His very own, and has borne it within the veil, and is even now, by His mighty working, turning it all to eternal profit, drawing it within the good purpose of God?

We cannot see how. I know it; I confess it. We cannot understand, measure, explain. No; for that we must wait, to see what is happening over there; what He is doing with it all, what fruit He is reaping, what glory he is making perfect through suffering over there in the unseen land. Until we know that, we cannot tell the good of all that we see going on about us. We have not the cue, the standard. Therefore we cannot show how the purpose is fulfilled. But Christ is born to be our Pledge that it is being achieved, that the end is secure, that the purpose is worthy. And He Himself is so confident that He will make it all good. He assures us that "we shall see His glory, the glory of the Father." We shall recognize the eternal rightness. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and he that cometh to Me I shall not cast out, but will raise him up at the last day." So confident, so quiet he is; so meek, yet

so assured! How impossible not to trust that gracious Authority, that blessed, blessed Voice! Oh, let us trust Him, and not be afraid.

And this eternal purpose, large and wide as it is—large and wide enough to gather up into itself the whole sum of human existence—is nevertheless able also, in the Person of Jesus Christ, to adapt itself with infinite pliability to the single and separate story of each solitary soul. To each one of us, to each alone, as if there were no other, He offers Himself, to become the one Purpose of our lives. The Purpose! The eternal Reason for all we do, for all we are. Nothing need be worthless, nothing need be aimless, if done in Him, if done for Him. The labour by which we win our daily bread—dull, dry, meaningless routine as perhaps it may be—can be made an offering to Him, can be done well for His sake; can be consecrated by prayer to Him in the morning, can be reviewed under His eyes in the evening. He takes it, as He took the bread at Emmaus, and blesses and purifies and gives thanks; and lo! there falls on our commonplace ways the light of a great purpose, the glory of Christ Jesus. “Whether ye eat or whether ye drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Is not this a purpose, a reason for always caring what we do, and how we do it? God announces to us, by taking our flesh, that everything human—work and toil, joy and suffering—all are acceptable to Him in Christ Jesus. All are being turned to spiritual use by Christ Jesus, as He lives and works at God’s right hand. Everything of ours is a contri-

bution to Him; everything of ours adds to Christ's store of resources; everything of ours goes into the common fund; on everything He lays His hand, that He may work it into the eternal purpose. Is not this a purpose, real and vital, for you; a purpose authoritative, binding, masterful; yet kindly, pleading, attractive, absorbing; a purpose that is universal, for young and old, for rich and poor, and great and small?

Who is there here } in this great church } who is secretly, sorrowfully, bitterly complaining, "It cannot matter what I do; it does no good to any one. It has no worth, no issue, no importance of any kind. Nobody cares whether I am selfish or unselfish, pure or impure, good or bad." Let him, let her, be sure of it, that is a lie—a devil's lie. Jesus Christ cares. God, in Christ, has shown you how deeply He cares. It matters to Jesus how you are faring, whether you stand or fall, whether this new year finds you better or worse than the last. It matters to Him, for He is gathering up all into the eternal purpose. He watches for all; He has use for all; He lays hands on all. "Gather up every fragment," He keeps crying, "that nothing be lost." Every fragment! Every fragment of your good will, broken, scattered, lost, forsaken as it may look, is still needed for that new manhood which is renewed and built up unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Your life has an end, a purpose, in Him. Believe it, hold it fast, rely upon it, act upon it. The one question is—In what state will you yield your life to Him? How much can you bring Him of that

Answer!

which He wants, of that which He loves, of that which He Himself has planted within you? He looks for it. Not a sparrow falls to the ground but He sees and cares. Every hair of your head is numbered. "Are ye not of more value than many sparrows, O ye of little faith?"

SERMON X.

THE FUNCTION OF THE GOSPELS.

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.”—ST. JOHN xxi. 25.

“MANY other things there are which Jesus did, which are not written in this book.” What is our first instinctive thought at being told that? Is it not this—“Oh, if we could but know them! If only they had been written down, what a priceless boon! They would be just what we most need. They would clear up so many points that are now tangled in hot dispute”? For, indeed, the recorded doings and sayings of the Lord are so pitifully, so terribly short. Just a few rapid incidents have been thrown together by the synoptics, mainly out of the very last year of His life. And only twenty days of all His earthly career were touched upon in St. John! How scanty, how partial, how unsatisfying! Was ever so tremendous a venture as the Christian Creed made on so slight a foundation?

And just think how far every single little word or deed of the Lord goes, how much it carries with it. That is His profound characteristic, that everything

He does is charged with significance. Sermons, meditations, commentaries, all find inexhaustible material in the least phrase He uses, in His passing acts. And rightly! Somehow or other, they tell; they hit; they speak home. They are always fresh, alive, fertile. Every text in the recorded Gospels holds in it the story of countless souls who have fed on it, have found their hope in it. No word of the Lord returns to Him empty. All of them go abroad in the world, to work, to convert, to sustain, to quicken. Twelve centuries have passed over them, and still they wear their eternal youth. No custom can make stale their infinite variety. Their very rarity increases the wonder. A tiny pamphlet would hold them all. What, then, if there were many more of them; if their number were but doubled or trebled? Surely the additions would be as original, as rich, as awakening, as those we now have. Nothing that He ever did could fail to be instinct with that same deep and tender character. Every word, every deed, of His that could be recorded would be pure gain.

And, moreover, as we have said, so many difficulties would surely be solved. For, as it is, it is the fragmentary abruptness of our records that creates such perplexities. There are no explanations, no qualifications. A brief, quiet word is dropped, and it rouses a hundred problems; and yet it is left there, alone, tantalizing us with its enigmatic compression. If only there were other passages that would elucidate it, or with which we could compare or contrast it, we should have so much better a chance of arriving at a

solution. Then we should not have the critics confusing us with suggested contradictions which we are certain could be reconciled at once by a little more information. We should not have the endless and depressing turmoil of the commentaries, warring with desperate fury often over the simplest and most fundamental of Christ's utterances.

So little, so very little, we have been told of Him! The more we love Him, the more we long to know of Him as He moved about amongst us on earth. Would not the Christian Church, we ask, have been spared many of its dismal blunders if it had more of the authoritative and undoubted commandments of Christ to keep it straight, to direct its feet, to enhearten its faith? Surely, if there is one matter about which we could be positively sure, it would be this—that the more we know of the actual living Jesus, the better it would be for us. Could anybody doubt that? If there are many things that could be told us about Him, in God's Name let them be written down once and for all.

So any one of us would probably argue and conclude. And yet St. John's deliberate verdict at the end of His life is given against that conclusion. He is speaking, as it would seem, to those about Him who felt just what we feel to-day. They are pressing him to tell them everything. He has come already to the close of what he has purposed to say. He has ended his Gospel with the twentieth chapter, at the confession of St. Thomas, in which the apostolic faith consummated its victory over doubt and fear. He has

shown how the whole body of the disciples had learned to rise above everything that could make it hesitate, or shrink, or despair. It has given out the crowning cry of belief, "My Lord and my God!" And with this the Apostle would stop, would be content. "Many other things" there are, but he is not going to write them.

Only, in view of certain intense personal interests and historic affections, he consents—shall we say?—to add in a final chapter, or epilogue, one scene of peculiar significance to the Church of his day; a scene which told of one last bond of memorable tenderness between himself and St. Peter; a scene which recorded how to the one, in his penitent love, was committed, after searching inquiry, that tending of the flock from which his threefold denial might have appeared to displace him; to the other was given the mysterious task of tarrying on and on into dim days of suspense, in strange uncertainty what the end might be.

And then, almost as if he were apologizing for having been induced to add even this much to the concluded and sufficient Gospel, he seems to protest that if he were to yield to their pressure, or to write down all he could remember or verify, why, he would never have done. Many other things there were, no doubt, which could be put down. "Many other signs which He gave in the presence of His disciples." He has thought of that; he has considered it; but he has determined, after all, to stop at what he has done. It is a selection only, he acknowledges; a

selection out of numberless other sayings and doings. But the mere attempt to collect together everything would be a wasteful proceeding. It would not come to any satisfactory conclusion. There would be no end to it. "If they were written down, I suppose the world itself would not contain the books that should be written."

Somehow, then, we were not on the track of St. John's mind when we began by craving for an indefinite accumulation of Gospel material. He does not consider that *that* is what we need. He has another purpose in view, as he writes, than that of recording everything that he could recall or discover about our Lord. And this purpose of his is better served by a selection than by an accumulation. Therefore he spends his energy and his experience, not in gathering, but in sifting. His effort lies in singling out from the swarm of memories those special and typical moments which will best convey the impression he desires. His long tarrying has taught him, through the selective working of the Holy Spirit, under the pressure of daily circumstances, what to keep and store, what to drop and prune, if the image of the Christ is to transmit itself with faithful emphasis to those that come after. To secure this he depends, not on the quantity, but on the quality, of the matter chosen.

Even in his own case, the years as they pass have taught him the same lesson—to pare down rather than to expand. Fewer and fewer words have become necessary to him. He would rather repeat and repeat

the familiar phrases into which he has concentrated all his love, than search about for fuller and more varied expression. As life draws to its end, it will be enough for him to say nothing but the one deep word in which all is hidden: "Little children, love one another." So the later story runs of his own habit of mind; and now, in putting his Gospel together, his skill lies in learning what to throw away. As the prime necessity of delivering His message whole and intact bears down upon him with increasing anxiety, it forces him to ever more exact and careful and fastidious choice in determining the limited material of his witness. If he can secure the perfect witness in a few incidents, he has done his true part. That will be sufficient to work its way; and if that is insufficient, no additions to it will succeed any better. That is the distinct judgment of the disciple who lay on Jesus' bosom. That is his deliberate mode of giving his testimony. Concentration, not expansion; selection, not abundance. That is his verdict, who "testified of these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true."

Why should it be so? Why should that be the fittest method? There is one dominant and effective answer. Because Jesus Christ is still alive, and at work. Jesus Christ is a living Person, ascended to the right hand of God, reigning in the midst of His Church. He, through His Spirit, is here, ready to meet difficulties as they arise, ready to answer the questions suggested by His words, ready to lead His believers on and on in the path on which they have

set out. All the Christian religion lies in this. It depends upon an actual communion between the believing soul and the living Christ. Not in reading about Him, or hearing about Him, or remembering the things that He once did, or being convinced that He really did them; or in admiration for His historical character; or in approving the excellence of His teaching; or in a touching sentiment for the beautiful drama once enacted by Him Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down into the Virgin's womb, and was made man, and suffered under Pontius Pilate—not in any of these does the religion of Christ exist. It begins and ends wholly in an active and energetic contact between the Person of Jesus Christ and the person of His followers; a contact begun in baptism, realized in confirmation, discovered in conversion, fulfilled in the Holy Communion, fed and nourished by the incessant actuality of prayer, aspirations, pleadings, pardons, as the soul travels point by point along the pathway of salvation, and is faithful to the handling of its Redeemer and King. The whole secret is here. The whole meaning of everything is to know Jesus Christ—to know Him as a Will Who governs us, to know Him as a Lover Whom we worship. There is no other end or aim in our religion than that.

Now, if this is so, what is wanted in the written record? Not to meet every perplexity beforehand; not to explain all the expressions used; not to be a complete statement of all that Christ has to say to us. No; for He will Himself be with us to guide and explain. He will have much to say hereafter that we

cannot bear now. He will Himself be ever completing what is now only begun. He will Himself uphold us through perplexities that cannot be avoided. And there must be nothing in the record that will tend to take the place of this living Lord, nothing that will seem sufficient of itself without Him. The one thing wanted is knowledge of Him Who is our invisible Friend—knowledge of Him; not merely of what He said or did, but of Him—of Him as a Personality, as a Character. It was His character which He revealed in His incarnate acts—His eternal character, made known in a visible stage, through definite or intelligible acts of will. We must, by help of the Gospel, know Him as a living Being, as a breathing human Friend; Who could be spoken to, delighted in, as Man; loved and adored as God.

Now, in saying this, we have cleared up St. John's decision to sift and select. For a character, as we all are aware, is understood, is revealed, through the quality rather than the quantity of its acts. To get at the heart and mind of a person, we turn to the characteristic deeds and words which came from him at the cardinal and critical moments of his life. We can afford to omit, to forget, a thousand details, if only we can single out and fasten upon those peculiar, those unique expressions which have on them the special stamp of his individuality. It is the typical facts that we require, when the fullest secret of his being emerged and flashed. To know him, then, at such vivid moments, is to know him for ever; for it is to know him as he is. A multitude of minor

events and records would be full of interest, no doubt, but they would not be essential; they would not really add to our knowledge; they would but corroborate and confirm it. Take the case of a dear friend passed away from us in death. What is it that lives in our faithful memory of him? What is it we love to bring up in imagination, and brood over, and caress, as it were, with an affectionate recollection? Not, I think, a quantity of details, but rather the few singular and intimate and memorable characteristics which marked him out from all others; the things which gave him his personal uniqueness; the things which no one else could have done or said; the points at which his innermost nature shot up to the surface, and looked out at us with a sudden intensity before it fell back again under the veils of ordinary existence. Certain single moments there have been, that abide in our mind, when he turned his face full upon us—the man himself. Certain actions there were which stand out clear from all else, as stars in the night. They may be great or little, but they were the windows through which we saw into his soul. The ring of his voice on a certain phrase will, perhaps, haunt us; the turn of his head, as he looked back and smiled; his gait, as we caught sight of him on some day that we remember so well; or that way he had of laying his hand on our arm—we feel it warm there to-day; the sort of word that was a favourite one on his lips—a word that was the key to so much in him which delighted us; or some happy day when the blessed hour was full of his

delicious presence; or, above all, the tone of his laugh when he was merry; or the look in his eyes at the hour of some deep sorrow that we had shared with him. These are what we cling to—these, and no more than these. To them we recur again and again, to bring him vividly before us. They are salient; they are the vital relics which our heart treasures up in its sanctuary, to kiss and to brood upon, and to thank God for. They may be few, but they are enough. We can let all the rest go. It is these by which our souls go out to the friend whom for a time is gone out of our sight. By these he is back with us. We feel him again at our side, we see him coming in at the door. It is he, in his old beloved reality. He is ours still.

Now, that is the office which the Gospels should fulfil for us. This Friend of ours, gone away through the grave or gate of death, is not, indeed, as our other dead friends. He is alive, and comes to us. But He is out of our sight; and we want to feel as if we knew Him Who draws near us under the veil. And here are the records, which propose to make Him intelligible, make Him intimate, make Him vivid, as a personal Friend, remembered in just the same fashion as we should recall our own friend.

And, my brethren, is this not exactly what they do succeed in doing? Read them; and whatever else may puzzle you as to what the Gospels mean by this or that phrase, or as to what He did on such and such a day, is it not made absolutely clear to you what type of man He was? Do you not become certain of the sort

of effect He would make upon you? Are you not intensely conscious of being in the presence of One Whose character preserves a steady and emphatic identity, which you cannot confuse with anybody else; which has a particular or unmistakable tinge of individuality, through which you feel that you could identify Him anywhere. "That is so like Him!" you can say. "That has a ring about it, a flavour, an accent, which I could recognize anywhere. That is Jesus of Nazareth. I know Him, as I know a personal friend. If He were to come again, if He were to enter into the room and speak, I should know that it was the same Whom these Gospels tell me about. Their portrait would make Him entirely familiar; so strong is the impression which they produce of a personal Presence—actual, concrete, consistent, uniform, alive; whose each word, or look, or gesture enables me to cry out, 'That is He! That is Jesus!'"

How do they manage to do this? Mainly by fixing attention on the cardinal scenes in which the deepest significance of His character came to the front—His trial, judgment, and death. That was the moment of moments in which He made manifest the secret of His life; in which everything in Him was put under sharpest tests, and gave experience of its quality and temper. For this He had been sent into the world—"the work that His Father had given Him to do." On it His whole self was concentrated; in the fiery light that thus beat down upon Him, all was revealed that made Him our Master and our King. This, then,

is the chief, the dominant thing, that the Gospels set themselves to tell. A third of their whole narrative is occupied with it. Every incident, word, detail, is brought out vividly and at length. A character, we have said, is known best in its greatest crisis. Then it is that it always gives proof of its permanent type. So here. If you know Jesus in His awful agony, His bloody Passion, you know Him as He is for ever. You are inside His life. You are in possession of His secret. Always, and on all occasions, He will be the same Whom at that hour you recognized and loved and worshipped.

The Gospels, therefore, tell chiefly of the judgment and death. And, besides that main event, they only aim at giving samples of His characteristic acts, and of His most pregnant and germinal sayings. Not a code of laws, nor a system of dogmas, nor a complete ethical handbook, nor a body of organized teaching: but germinal sayings—the sayings which start you thinking; the sayings which arrest you; which turn you round; which give you a direction; which put out an influence upon you; which draw you after them; which are felt as a pressure, a weight; which catch hold, and haunt, and follow, and dog you down; which creep inside your surface existence, and dig down, and burrow, and upset, and disturb, and pierce, and divide asunder to the very joints and marrow. These are the words which carry a personality, an individuality, with them. They come upon you as if with the force of a living presence, standing close by you, and speaking with a voice that compels attention. Many things they leave unanswered. Many problems they

stir rather than compose. The settling of these will come afterwards, through the life in the Lord, through the Eternal Spirit ; or, indeed, they may remain dark for long years. Yet, for the present, all that is needed is the touch of person by person, of soul by soul, of will by will. That is life ; that is religion. That is the Christian faith.

The Gospels have this one aim, to enable us to know Who it is in Whom we are asked to believe. "To know Him Whom we have believed ;" "To know God, and Jesus Christ, Whom He has sent ;" "These things are written that ye may know of the truth." That is the whole business, beloved. It is natural enough for us to wish to have more written. But do we not deceive ourselves if we think that, by having more, we should find our perplexities cleared, our hesitations dismissed ? The longest book, the clearest statements, by themselves, must still fail to solve the difficulties, if the sense of Who it is that speak is absent. The Jews heard more and saw more than we have in our hands to-day, and they were only the more baffled and the more determined in their hostility. Judas saw and heard far more—saw and heard all these many things which John has left unwritten ; and, after all, he went away and communed with the chief priests how he might betray Him for thirty pieces of silver.

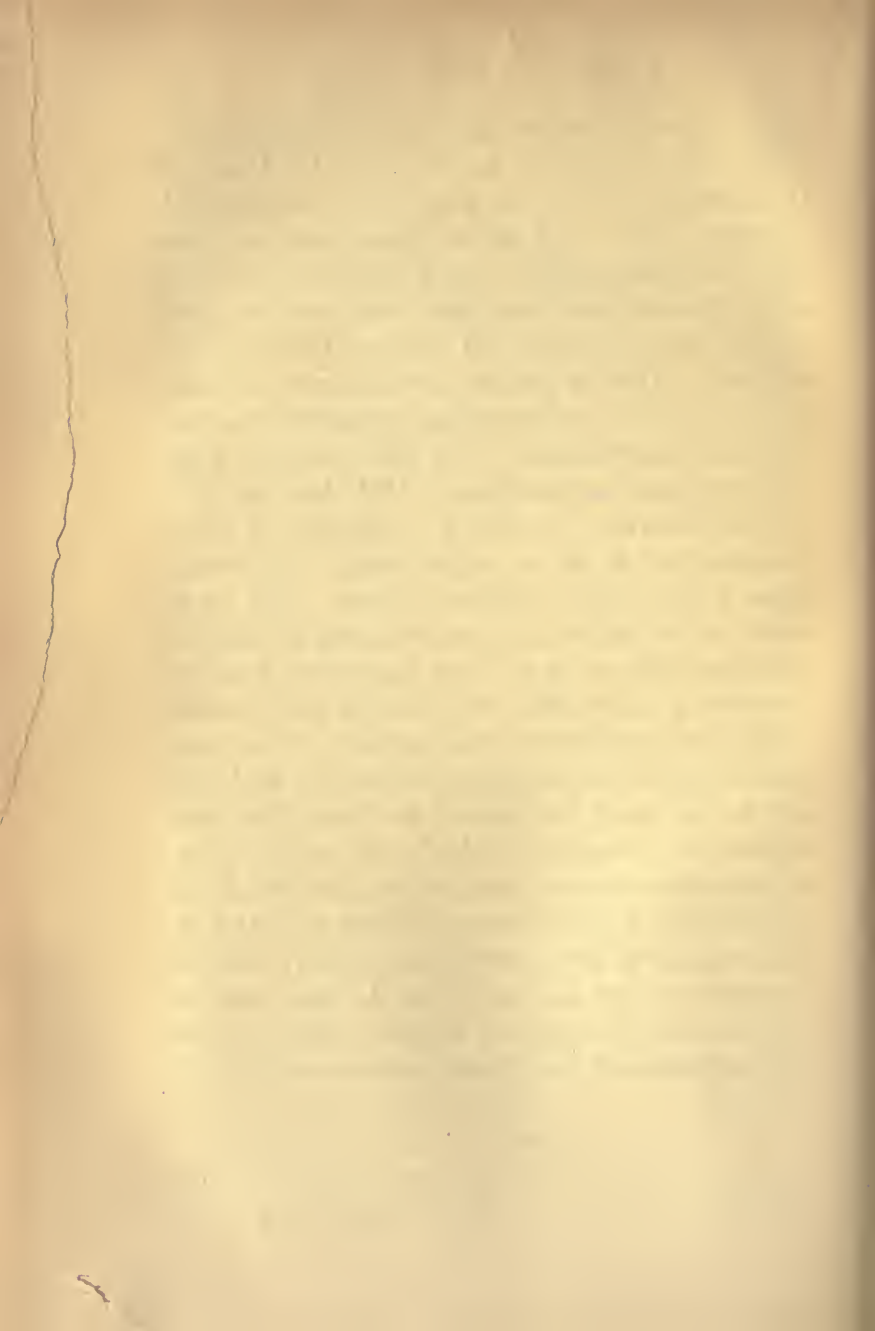
No ! there is enough in our brief Gospels to challenge us with a living Presence Which we must face ; and, having faced, must either follow or flee. And it is not the book, but that living Presence, in which we are to believe, on which we are to rely. That

is its moral challenge. There it stands and moves and speaks. We can all feel it, as it draws near, as it passes by. "Who is it?" the blindest of us find ourselves forced to ask—"Who is it that is passing by?" A personal Presence! It is enigmatic enough; it is bewildering; it annoys; it says but few things very plainly. But there it is; we are conscious of it; we cannot escape it—a Presence which is not to be put by. What are we going to do? It stands there, delivering this challenge by its sheer existence. Not by arguments, not by explanations, not by persuasions, not by these weapons, does it make its attack. No! but by being what it is. "I am what I am;" "I am that which I also told you;" "Whom say ye that I, the Son of man, am?" That is the Voice that speaks through the written records—speaks as none other ever spoke. It is the voice of a living Man, not of a book—using a book through which to speak, but Himself the Key of the written Word; Himself the Power in the book; Himself the Argument, the Appeal; Himself the Soul of the record. Though all the books that the world could contain were written about Him, the situation would still be the same. At the end, when we had read them all, the one question would remain to be answered. "After all that has been written, wilt thou follow Me; wilt thou trust Me; wilt thou obey Me; wilt thou put thy soul in My hands?"

That question—that challenge—is just what you and I are facing now.

The words that we read in the printed page have

passed into the mouth of One Who is pressing for an immediate response: "I am the Vine;" "I am the Good Shepherd;" "Come unto Me;" "My peace I give unto you;" "I am the Resurrection and the Life." So He is saying—now, to-day; and each soul in this church hears Him; and each must do something to meet that voice. It is no good, now, to read any more. There is but one demand; what will you do; how will you act? Puzzles, perplexities, remain; hesitation, uncertainties. Yes, but the quiet voice still challenges our confidence: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin? And if not, then, when I speak the truth, why do ye not believe Me?" We cannot ignore or avoid that insistent pressure. We must make up our minds how we are going to treat it. For He has met us in a narrow place, and we cannot pass without seeing Him. Oh! now for the brave act of the soul, now for the movement of the adventurous will, now for the spring of faith! No book will give us that. Only the Spirit of the living God, that works at once through the book, and works within our hearts—the eternal Spirit of the ascended Lord, that takes of His and shows it unto us. Cry to Him; appeal to Him; surrender to Him; commit life, and soul, and will, and mind to Him, that so you may pass through the written record into the heart of Jesus, and may know that you have life in His Name.



CLAIMS.

SERMON XI.

THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS.

“And when they saw Him, they were amazed : and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us ? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me ? wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business ?”—ST. LUKE ii. 48, 49.

WE know how it sometimes happens that a scene, which has been for years familiar and beloved, suddenly greets us with a new impression. We have caught it from some unexpected angle, or a flying light has shot over it, bringing out some colour or some effect of perspective or of contrast which we never before hit upon. There it is, the old habitual place, which we fancied that we knew by heart, and yet there is a look in it to-day which we had never suspected, which we had always missed. A touch of beauty, a flash of significance, has given it a new consecration. The novelty of the effect is heightened by the very fact that it is brought out of materials so intimately known.

Now, is not this often the case with the Four Gospels ? Those wonderful books—how well we seem to know them ! From our earliest memories the familiar rhythms have sung “the old, old story” in our ears. We turn the pages only to pass the eye

along its habitual and anticipated sequences. And then, by a sudden stroke now and again, a fresh gleam of light falls, and some fragment of the Gospel story starts into swift and radiant prominence. We had read that bit a thousand times before, yet it lay unmarked; pleasant, indeed, and helpful, one perhaps among many that we liked; yet with no special note. But to-day it stands out as if alone. A peculiar force lies about it. A splendid meaning breaks from it. How is it we can have passed it over so easily? How is it we ever missed its vivid interest?

So the Gospels approve and verify themselves to each new generation. The story is old as ever; but new points of perspective are taken up, new suns shine upon the scene; and thus it comes about that often what was before in foremost emphasis drops back into shadow, and that which was of old part of the broad and general background leaps forward into sharp singularity of light.

Some such prominence has fallen in our day on the scene recorded by St. Luke, to which my text refers. So strangely alone it is, this tale of the boyhood of Jesus, plucked out of the heart of that silence which broods round the long hours of the Lord's growth at Nazareth. Ah, how we pine to penetrate within that shrouding silence—the silence during which the blessed Plant sprang up out of the dry ground! Would that we might follow the unrecorded process, in the mystery of which He passed from the unconscious impotence of the Babe, passive in the manger, swathed in swaddling-clothes, to that full, ripe, conscious man-

hood of His ministry—complete, self-mastered, sure-footed ; clear in aim, in purpose, in decision ; calm, measured, deliberate, and determined. Between the two moments lies the whole story of the upward growth.

Growth ! He grew, point by point, stage by stage. Life opened upon him according to its own proper graduated rules. When He was a child, He spake as a child, He felt as a child, He thought as a child. Only as He slowly became a man did he put away childish things. A Child—a real, living, joyous Child, with a merry heart, with glowing limbs, with dancing feet. He was that first.

And then He must have gone, at six years old, to the village school, to sit with His class, ringed close about their teacher on the floor, just as you may see them to-day at Cairo, in el-Azhar. And He must have learned there, with His playmates, by word of mouth, by question and answer, the texts from Leviticus, with which a Jewish child's education began ; the texts that told of sacrifice, and atonement, and burnt-offering, and of all the deep ritual of the great temple yet unseen, which He would be taken to visit as soon as He came of age—that temple whose doom He should Himself pronounce as He wept over it the tears of a loyal-hearted Jew ; wept to foresee the day when there should not be left in it one stone upon another that should not be cast down.

So He must have grown. Experiences must have accumulated slowly ; faculties must have awakened ; powers must have made their first experiments ; strength must have crept upwards, stretching nerve

and muscle, expanding thought and imagination and will. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." It cannot have been otherwise, for in becoming man He became all that a man essentially is. And man grows into his full stature; he does not attain it at a bound. This process is no accident; it is part of the human nature; it belongs to the type, to grow. Each moment, which essentially belongs to the normal and natural growth, must our Lord have taken, hallowed, sealed; to all this slow and patient advance He stood committed, when, in taking upon Him to deliver man, He willingly abhorred not the Virgin's womb.

Now, growth is what we in our day have learned inevitably to emphasize. All our discoveries, whether critical or scientific, carry us into the manners and methods by which men and things grow. In gaining this insight we have lost something, indeed—lost the power to grasp the ends to which things tend; we are very weak in the absolute philosophy of Being. Here, where men in other days were eager and forcible, we falter and fail. But, while we are weak in apprehending ends, our whole instinct goes out with energetic interest to detect the beginnings of things, to unravel their gradual passage out of the dimness of the stars into the clearness of the later daylight. The secrets of origins, of embryonic movements, of increasing adaptation, the process of orderly and organic advance,—these are what lie open to the lens of our watchful examination, our minute patience. "Development" is our watchword in every department of knowledge. We

never feel as if we knew anything of plant or animal, of man or period, until we can see how it began, how it came about, how it grew. And when once we have analyzed its growth, we are but too apt to sink back satisfied; we seem to ourselves to know all about it that need be known.

This is our temper. And, therefore, it is with a special and irrepressible interest that the problem of our Lord's growth presents itself to us—presents itself with an intensity and a reality that it can never have had before. And it is, therefore, upon us that the barrier of that silence imposes the most severe restraint. For His growth passed in silence. Even as the kingdom of heaven, which cometh not with observation; even like the corn, which grows while men rise and sleep, according to its appointed scale of graduated degrees; so the Blessed Child opened slowly out upon the earth which He had made, in the wistful silence of His Galilean home. We gather, indeed, from St. Luke the assurance that, in that quiet hiding-place, He did indeed undergo the movements, the changes, that we associate with growth; but we may not watch the process—that is denied us. Only the confident word of the Evangelist, at least, secures to us the knowledge that it was done. "Jesus, the Child, increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." He grew. Step by step He rose to His full height of body, to His full range of mind, to His full measure of gifted graciousness.

"He grew!" It is hard, indeed, for the subtlest theology to tread securely amid these delicate intri-

encies of relationship which knit the growing intellect and will to the personal Word of God. But, after all, theology is bound over in service to the positive facts of the Gospel life. Its sole office is to obey them. Where it may fail to arrive at solutions and reconciliations, the facts still abide; the facts hold their own; the facts cannot be gainsaid; the facts find their own reconciliation. Just as in our own region of existence we hold on our way, whether speculation can account for our free-will or no, so here; the Gospel life is the supreme reality; it is the primary test and rule and standard and determinant, under which all dogmatic reasoning must fall. And, according to the Gospel record, whatever the intellectual difficulties, it remains a plain fact that Jesus, the Word of God, increased. As He abhorred not to pass under the yoke of weakness, of hunger, of trouble, of harassing distress, of pain, of spiritual trembling, anguish, amazement; so, too, He was content to assume the limitations of growth. He took upon Him not only our flesh, but also the conditions under which our flesh arrives at its proper stage of existence, at the gradual exercise of its capacities. He grew in wisdom; He grew in stature; He grew in favour. Most blessed news! If we may not watch on at it, yet to be assured of its occurrence is our comfort.

But if the veil of silence has fallen on so much that we cannot but desire to look into, with what an outbreak of relief do we fasten on this solitary story which the diligence of St. Luke has been guided to rescue out of all the hidden mystery of

growth, for our loving attention ! Here he has been allowed to bring before us, not merely the broad or secret process by which His human nature won its advances, but a most signal moment of its increase, when it arrived at a new level, as it were, at a bound.

Let us turn to our own experience, in order that we may picture to ourselves that perfected form of it which our Lord deigned to embody. In all our own human lives there is some such moment as is here suggested by the narrative. There is a moment at which youth first wakes out of its childhood, and becomes aware of itself. The soul seems suddenly to burst its sheath. Some novel experience strikes it ; some impact from without releases the force that had lain dormant. At a touch, in the twinkling of an eye, the chain is snapped, the slumber is broken. We all know how buds that have swollen in silence break open on some happy hour in spring, when winds are warm. So too the soul ; it starts ; it gives a leap ; a door is flung open ; swiftly it enters in upon a fresh scene. All that has hitherto lain about it, or occupied it, falls back as a dream, as a childish game. It is made aware of its own spiritual independence, of its own solitary dignity, of its own royal inheritance.

Such a moment is never forgotten, the moment at which the boy ceases to see through the eyes of others, ceases to speak, to think, as others do about him ; when he sees with his own eyes, and faces his own world, and seeks for his own interpretation of it. Such moments, when they come, are full of a great awe ; we are rapt into a solitude of our

own, hidden in which we forget our earlier interests ; they have become as a very little thing. We are absorbed in the passion of a spiritual discovery ; we are caught up, young though we be, into the solemnity of those swift and sudden intuitions, which have the

“ Power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence.”

Many a man or woman can recall echoes of such times. Perhaps, long after we have forgotten them, we drop upon some fervid or grave resolution, written with our unformed hand, in a youthful diary, the record of some such momentous awakening. We smile as our eyes fall on that record, yet smile with a sigh of sad regret that, with all wiser intelligence, we have not retained the intense and earnest seriousness which makes sacred that old scrawl.

Such may have been our own experiences, though with us always marred by wilfulness, clouded by conceit. And our Blessed Lord lays hold, in this temple-scene, on all that is true and natural in this upspringing stir of opening youth. It is not all conceit, it is not all wilfulness, this sudden tumult of thought that overwhelms us. Nay ! at its base is an instinctive motion of the growing manhood in us, designed by God our Maker, inherent in our growth. Therefore the Lord adopts it for His own. He sets His sanctioning seal upon it. And this without offence. For as His human will found scope for its natural efforts within the sheath of his Divine will ; as in the temptation, and at Gethsemane, it “ learned obedience

through suffering;" so His human intellect found place for its normal movements and discipline and expansion, though held and carried within the compass of the Divine Personality. And as the discipline of His will was no dramatic picture, but was real to the very core of it; so this upward motion, this graduated training of His mental powers, was real, vital, intense. Circumstance, environment, acted upon Him with their proper impact, and evoked a true response. He built up His experiences out of the world about Him. He was sensitive to the play of outer things. Therefore it was that when the novel circumstances of the holy city touched Him round about; when He stood, for the first time, on the hill of Zion and told the towers thereof; when He passed within the glories of that dedicated house; all the soul of Him Who was a Jew, "born under the Law," awoke and stirred. In His unstained innocence He, surely, was, not less, but far more, receptive than we of outward impressions in their primal verity. And, therefore, under this special invocation, a new moment was reached, a new level was attained. The entire manhood in Him leapt forward, liberated and evoked by the new and splendid appeal.

The Evangelist lays special emphasis on the change that was then wrought in Him. For not only are the doctors surprised at His understanding and answers, but the parents—they too, who knew Him so familiarly—were equally amazed. They had detected no premonitory symptoms. They never guessed where He would be found, or what He would be doing. They had not expected that He would assume promi-

nence, or display His power in that fashion. They had supposed Him to be of their company. They did not take special note; they relied on His constant obedience. There was no need for them to trouble. They had learned to think that He was sure to move along with the rest, in the ordinary way. Evidently it was a sudden and abrupt reversal of His habits. Nothing about Him had led them to anticipate that He would do anything different at such a time from other Nazarene boys. "When they saw Him, they were amazed." Yes; it was a change, so deep, so unintelligible, so unanticipated, that the mother is startled by it into something of a reproach. "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us?" It was so unlike Him, so unusual! Up till now He had always conformed to their wishes, been at their charge and disposal. There had been no sign of this independence, of this aloofness, of this individual claim to freedom, of this marked singularity. "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing!"

My brethren, our Lord here takes up into His Divine humanity a moment in our lives which has in it a peculiar delicacy and a peculiar difficulty. He sanctions and hallows it. He allots it its place. He rescues it from its moral perils. Moral perils! For this moment, at which our conscious and growing youth comes to itself, is the moment at which it signalizes its own independence from all that has been traditional or derived. It is itself, and not another's. That is its discovery. That is what so suddenly

startles it. Hitherto it has, as it were, still lain within the womb of childhood. Now it recognizes, as it never had done before, that it has its own private and personal work, its own private story to work out, its own life to create, its own spring of joys and sorrows, its own right to its own feelings, hopes, imaginations, thoughts. It must answer for itself to its own conscience. It must bear its own burden. It must die alone, and alone it must stand before the judgment-seat of God.

So it learns, and it learns it often, in a sudden moment of self-revelation. And that first moment must be a moral crisis for each one of us. How will we behave in it? What will be the use we make of such a tremendous freedom? The happiness of our home-life stands or falls with our decision. Too well we know, in our broken day, the bitter wrecks of home and of peace, of brotherly love and charity, which these hours of new-won independence have strewn thick about our path. What family has not some pitiful split to deplore, some gnawing worry, some sore wound that will not heal; and all because of some failure in the conduct of this fateful hour.

Turn we, then, in our need, to watch how the Lord Himself deals with this particular crisis in His own life.

First, it is clear that He claimed His full liberty. He could not deny Himself the right to act for Himself, to inquire for Himself, to make good His own independence. The hour has struck for Him when He must break through the limitations and restraints of His childhood, and must choose His own way of

going about His Father's business. He has responsibilities towards that Father which He must fulfil, even though at the cost of some severance from the tender ties of home; yea, even at the cost of some pain to the mother whom He loves so dearly.

Is this freedom which He claims the prerogative of His sole Sonship—of His unique relation to the Father? Have we no part or lot in that demand? But surely that Sonship of His has been made ours. Into its prerogatives we are baptized. In Christ, by Christ, we too are endowed with peculiar responsibilities. We are given authority to become the sons of God. We have rights in the Father's house. We are charged to be about our Father's business—business with paramount demands upon us, which may have to override father and mother, and sister and brother; which may be driven to divide a house against itself.

In Him, in His body, each individual soul wins a higher value, a fuller freedom. Its freedom of development, its freedom of judgment, its freedom of thought, its freedom of action,—these are not lost or diminished; nay! they are intensified, braced, enriched, by those who are born into that Spirit of liberty Which bloweth, as the wind, where it listeth. Even so, as He is, is every one born of Him. Those who have this holy unction know all things. They judge all, and are judged of none.

Yes; in the Son we are made free with the freedom of the Son. And, at certain special hours of our life, this freedom will assert itself. But then, let us be sure of this,—that this heightened freedom must

heighten also the severe responsibility with which it is exercised. It is this which we are so apt to forget. "Freedom," "liberty,"—the words sound to us as if they set us loose from responsibilities. Yet, claimed as they are by us, not in our individual capacity, but as children of God, as members of Christ's Body, they must be held in trust to the Father Who gave them; in trust to the Son, "the Head," in Whose Name we act.

Look at Christ the Lord! Consider; where does He betake Himself; within what conditions does He put out His earliest freedom? "Sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them as well as asking them questions." It was in touch with the ancient wisdom, under the schooling of the authoritative voice of His Church, that He set His thoughts to work for themselves. He, indeed, asked questions. He set free His inquiring spirit, but He did it facing the fulness of the responsibility, bringing His inquiries into the light of the best learning, laying out His mind at the feet of them who sat in Moses' seat.

And not only asking questions, but hearing also. He listened; He heard. Ah! young hearts, aglow with new-found powers, with new-won liberty, is that your case? How often, in the excitement of asking our first questions, have we forgotten that there is any need to hear at all what others are saying! How often, in the sudden discovery of our own independence, we seem to be cut loose from every bond that binds us to others; above all, that binds us to the past! The wonder of thinking for ourselves seems to

dismiss, to put out of court, what others have thought. It appears to depose all old authorities. All men before us seem to us to have been dreaming until we arrived on the scene. Now at last the truth is out, and their day is over. The swing, the energy, the rapture of our own spontaneous movement, carries us along as if it were sufficient of itself. We yield ourselves to the sheer joy of feeling ourselves free.

Yet the freedom is a trust, solemn and awful. We must answer for its use; answer for it to the Body of Christ, in and through which we acquired it; answer for it to the Father, Whose business it is that we are about.

Dear brethren in Christ, those who are young, I would ask you, Have you brought your liberty of thought to the house of your Father? Have you taken it as a sacred charge from Him? Have you made your inquiries, as in that house of His, under His more immediate Eye, before the altar, in grave recognition of its tremendous responsibility? The Father's own peculiar business—it is for that you are made free; not for your own fun or elation; not to startle and confuse your neighbours; not for the flash of mere debate; no! but in the Father's own Name; as His children; in His household; as endowed with His unction; as called upon to see and understand His deeper mind. Will you so treat and handle it as if nothing could be more anxious or more serious than the liberty of the sons of God?

And, in the sense of this seriousness, will you try to sit at the feet of the doctors; asking questions indeed, seeking to satisfy yourself; yet hearing

also; turning to the best Wisdom; not to some rough parody, some blurred caricature of Christian truth, but searching it out in its best and real sources; getting positive grip on its fuller meaning; seeking to understand what it is that you are talking about; to understand it as a whole in its accumulated wisdom, along the lines of its ancient masters, its qualified doctors, its trained saints; not content with a sharp question or a sharp retort, but hearing as well as seeking; listening, taking in, receiving; learning what is the splendid heritage of the Church of God, with its weighed and measured experiences, built together, under slow discipline, into the Catholic Creed by those who have, through the grace of God, exercised this same freedom of thought before you, and have entered further than you into the height and length and depth and breadth, and have understood, with a more ardent faith than you have ever yet reached, "that love of Christ which passeth all understanding." Will you do this? That is the question pressed home to you.

And, lastly, one word to the parents, to the older generation, as again and yet again they find themselves in face of this freedom claimed by the young. How touchingly our story speaks to them! They will remember Joseph and Mary who went a whole day supposing the Child to be of their company. Ah! is not that just what happens? Father and mother travel along as usual, as they have done before, for many a year. The seasons come and go; the Church round repeats itself. All seems quiet, smooth, pleasant,

habitual, and they never dream that their children are not travelling along with them, of their company. They never notice that they have already been a whole day without them; and, so little do they suspect what it means, that it is three days before they find them. They, the children, without their observation, have left them, have dropped out of the line. A change has been at work upon them. And, long before the parents recognize it, a severance in thought, in sympathy, in feeling, has been going on, has already taken place. Suddenly, too late, they miss something. Alas! it is no longer as it was; yet "they had supposed them to be of their company." It was so natural to suppose it, so easy, so right. And, as they first are startled into recognizing what has happened, as they go off to seek them sorrowing, as they discover the facts, how angry they become, how bothered, perplexed, distracted! No stopping for them at the gentle salute of the Virgin, "Son, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." No! rather scowls, frowns, denunciation, menaces. So absurd it seems! Why should not these boys and girls be content with that which satisfied their fathers and mothers? Why persist in troubling themselves with new-fangled inquiries? Why not leave such difficulties to be settled by wiser heads? And, above all, when discovered and challenged, why should they adopt those solemn airs, as of important people who must decide for themselves, who cannot take the word for it of their elders and betters?

So common that anger; oh! and so pathetic. It is

the cry of natural affection. And yet it is asking the one impossible thing; it is beating itself against the inevitable. The young cannot be as the old; they must be young; they must fall under new influences; they must be sensitive to new impressions; they must hear new things; they must feel their way forward. As all their fathers did, so must they. For all are pilgrims. All are moving on. The tents must always be taken up, and men be moving on to the fresh camp, fresh scenes, fresh adventures, fresh knowledge. It must be. They may carry the old truth with them by God's mercy, but it still must be into new places. They are young; they are new; they cannot be wholly what we were; they have something to think for God, something to do for Christ, that we never thought or did. Let us believe it. They are young, and youth is a sacred thing. It must go "about its Father's business." Is it vain, headstrong, arbitrary? Yes! too often it is sadly alloyed with wrong; and yet there is something in it which we must revere, with which we may not interfere. There is a point at which we must fall back, and be satisfied to watch and pray.

Watch and pray! Just these two things we still can do.

1. *Watch*; lest we go on supposing that our children are still of our company when they are not. To be on the watch; to look round; never to lose them without noticing it; to note where the change begins. Not to forget that they are growing up; not to go on treating them as mere children. Watch! and be near to help. A sympathetic word, a mere

look of tender interest, a pressure of the hand, a timely question, a tactful hint,—oh! they may do wonders. Anything but blindness; anything but stupid anger. Watch for opportunities. Anticipate the change; be beforehand with the risk. Recognize that it will come. Take careful measures; satisfy rising intellectual needs. Watch for the growing souls of your children.

2. *Pray.* Secret prayer is often so much more effective than open arguments, certainly than open anger. Above all, pray when the crisis is come, and is at its worst. When the child seems swept by gusts of false doctrine, it is far better to pray in patience than to hurry it, than to be fretful, than to harass the child's troubled soul. Watch, pray! and recall ever and again the story of that wise old bishop, to whom the mother of Augustine turned in her anguish over her unsteady son. She begged him (as the son himself records) "to argue with me and refute my errors. And he was unwilling; and wisely, as I afterwards saw; for he said that I was unteachable at the moment, inflated as I was with the excitement of my new theory, and with my success in putting perplexing questions to many who had not the skill to encounter me. 'Only leave him alone,' he said to her, 'and just pray to God for him; he will find out his mistake in time for himself.' And she could not acquiesce, and with floods of tears implored him to see me and talk with me; until he, with a touch of irritation, said, 'Go and live in your present spirit, for it cannot be that the son of such tears should ever perish.'"

SERMON XII.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

"They have no wine."—ST. JOHN ii. 3.

It is a scene such as St. John loves to draw forward—a scene in which the apparent accidents of a passing incident are caught by the flash of the hidden glory that bides its time behind them. He feels how words and acts, in themselves perhaps casual and unconscious, are possessed by a higher spirit of prophecy, so that a phrase, dropped at hazard and unawares, becomes the vessel of that supreme revelation which St. John has, through years of absorbing study, apprehended in its innermost laws. So he fastens on the passing word of the ruler of the feast, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now," with the same wonder with which he watched the water and the blood start from the crucified body of his Lord at the touch of the unwitting spear. In both cases a profound secret of revelation sprang into light through the chance of a transitory circumstance, where it was least of all to be expected. The contrast between the unforeseen occasion and the glory that breaks through it exercises a mystical fascination. The deep truth strikes home

with the more telling force by virtue of the unlikelihood of the vehicle that it snatches up for its service.

It is this which makes him lay hold of facts in their typical and suggestive character. Not that this inclines him to throw over the facts for the sake of the mystical parables which they suggest, but rather to dwell with loving insistence on the value of facts, just because they have proved themselves so rich in spiritual significance. And so here, in my text, with this phrase of the Virgin. It was pregnant with suggestive significance. It went far beyond its immediate purpose. It was prophetic. "They have no wine!" Somehow, by some strange hidden law at work below the surface, through that surprising deftness and harmony which we, in our puzzled amazement, call "coincidence," by which external circumstances, at intervals of which the law is known only to God, overleap the blind barriers of that for which our ignorance has no other name but "chance," and by a sudden rush fuse themselves with internal motions of will and mind, the Virgin is prompted to let fall a word which goes right home to the heart of the mystery which the Lord is come to fulfil. It appears to be but the natural expression of a kindly sensitiveness that is distressed at a temporary difficulty. But, like a pebble thrown into a silent pool, it wakes a tremor, a movement, a thrill, throughout the depths of the Lord's being. It touches a chord which is charged with brooding music. The very secret of His mission here on earth is laid open. In the sound of that short phrase He feels the pressure of

the forces, the tremendous forces, which will lift Him at last upon the cross that all may be drawn to Him. He already foresees the end—that awful hour, still delayed, but so surely arriving, when, lifting His eyes to heaven in that upper chamber, amid His own whom He has loved to the uttermost, He will say, “Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son.” Ah! why should His own mother hasten that hour which should have terror as well as glory in it? Why should hers be the voice to bring it near Him, to signalize its coming? Why should she rashly, impulsively, utter a cry which, like a sudden sound in silent snow-fields, may hurry the fall of the suspended avalanche? “They have no wine!” A single word, indeed, yet holding in it such deep expectations, such thrilling appeals, such significant needs. “They have no wine!” And He cannot hear that plea and not respond to it. It is the very cry that enters into His ears and draws out His forthcoming pity. Yet the pity which rises to meet that need will only complete its gift when it has given its life, its blood. Ah! the strain, the straitening of that baptism; the bitterness of that cup of which He must drink before He can fill it for others with the new wine of heaven! “Ah, woman! ah, My mother! why press Me with that irresistible insistence? What have I do with thee? Why should you be the one to force My steps, to break up My merciful delay? Mine hour is not yet come.”

“They have no wine!” That is the very heart of the complaint with which we of to-day besiege the compassion of the Lord. We have become increasingly

sensitive to the pathos of the fate of those who fall outside the area of God's good gifts. "They have no wine!" That is what has struck us so profoundly. Entire masses of our population have been discovered to be in that particular plight. It is not so much their abject poverty that we are thinking of; not the wretched homelessness of those classes who just scrape along from day to day, hovering over the abyss of pauperism or crime, liable to the terrors of starvation at every touch of exceptional pressure. No! rather the phrase from St. John comes to our lips as we rise above all the region of picturesque and melodramatic distress, and consider the lot of those who work their way along in dull, hard, monotonous toil; toil that just carries them through; which uses all their practical forces, and leaves nothing over for relief and for joy; toil that, at its best, still only just sustains them on their feet, and can never venture to slacken, and can never land them in security, far from the peril of lapse, or from the anxiety of what may come on the morrow; toil that permits of no freedom or expansion on this side or on that, no glad exercise of surplus energy, no relief, no relaxation, and no leisure; toil without light and shadow, without the luxury of change, without any vivid hope, without colour, without flavour, without enjoyment; toil amid ugly and squalid surroundings, unenlightened by grace, or gift, or glory, sunless and joyless, ringed round by all that is dim and harsh and unfeeling. This is the life that so dismally depresses us as we look round on it in its immense multitudinousness

and sadly mutter, "These people have no wine!" There is a hitch somewhere; there is something missing which ought to be there. God never meant human life to be like this. It was never intended to be wholly used up in the mere monotony of work. Everything in nature, though toil for food be its law, is given its opportunity of joy, its sense of fling, its moment of happy brimming release. No one can watch the gathering of birds as they skim over quiet evening waters, or toss themselves in scudding groups against the sunset skies, and not know what is needed to make life complete. { It is this element of joyful abandonment that is so terribly lacking from the grimy days of our depressed toilers. They need so much beside the opportunity of winning their food. Minds are being stifled; imaginations are being choked; emotions are lying buried and deadened. All these want light, air, liberty, peace, if they are to spring and grow at all. Life should be to all not only a hard taskmaster wringing out the uttermost scrap of working energy, but it ought to have some flavour in it of a richer freedom, some spark of a more kindling warmth, some touch of happy merriment, some echo of a marriage feast. } No life is human that is wholly occupied in business, that has no thought in it of a fuller expansion, no thrill of a larger movement, no vent for the feelings and instincts and passions that toil leaves unused. You and I have all enjoyed this freedom. We all have known its power; why should not these others, men and woman like ourselves? That is what we have been asking. Why are they so fast bound

down under their burdens? Why are they denied all that gives this earth its sparkle and its cheer? It cannot be by God's will. It is an unseemly accident. It is a disaster that ought to be remedied. "Lord, Lord! they have no wine!"

Now, it is in this particular sense that our own generation has been more peculiarly stirred. Other days have had their great philanthropists, have had their sudden accesses of pity for the very poor and the very miserable; but it has been our special note to have become sensitive to the law that, after all, man does not live by bread alone, but by much more. It has ceased to be possible that we should be satisfied by the mere fact that the working classes can just manage to secure the wages of necessity. The existence of whole sections of our fellow-men who can do just that at the best and no more, seems to us more depressing and more painfully wrong in some ways than the strange dramatic play of the poorer classes beneath them, whose chequered life, at least, allows room for more human interests and for more electrical sympathies. Thence is it that the movement of the day is not so much set in the direction of higher wages as of shorter hours.

We have all been growing sensitive to this, I say; and, in saying it, do not suppose that I attribute any special credit to ourselves. We do not claim to be better than our fathers, because we have been taught this or that secret which was not brought under their judgment. Each generation is allotted its proper function, its area in which to work. And

while possessed with its own particular task, it has, of course, no faculties to spare, to notice the areas yet untouched, the burdens that will yet have to be borne. But as each allotted portion of work is completed, the eyes are lifted and turned towards a fresh need that lacks fulfilment; a fresh necessity that must now be met. And each generation is tested and approved according to the degree with which it recognizes and responds to the particular field of labour which, in its day, is laid open to it. To say that we have grown peculiarly sensitive to a special need, is not to praise ourselves, but only to take note of the call made upon us, to acknowledge and accept our proper responsibility. They, of old, had one thing to do; they did it with greater or less success; now we have got to do another. And shall we do better or worse than they? That is the only question that matters.

Nor, again, by claiming a new degree of sensitiveness, do we mean that no one was sensitive to this same necessity before us. Nay, indeed; single strong souls or knots of heroic men have felt it before us, and have striven to satisfy it. All we mean is that now, instead of its being a prophetic effort of the few, it is the common inheritance of the mass. It is not now left to some rare devoted band, struggling against neglect and indifference, to assert that the life of the poor should have something more in it than bread and work alone; but we, all of us, who are brought up all under the influences that are astir in our age, recognize this instinctively. We have not to educate ourselves by effort into this sensitiveness to their fate;

we find ourselves having it; we drink it in with the air we breathe. We all naturally are touched with spontaneous pity; we, of sheer necessity, are clouded by the shadow of their misfortune; we cannot be at ease while we perceive what they are losing; the dismal monotonous grind of their unrelieved days weighs upon our spirits. Without any merit of ours, by the mere growth of things, our attention is quickened, our sympathy is yet working. Every man we meet, of any character at all, is moved by the same compassion, is unhappy at the same contrast. It is all about; it is electric; it is contagious. We catch sight of the same distress in every one's face. No one of any intelligence escapes it, however comfortable be his own condition. Do what he will, he still feels about him the presence of these depressed and overburdened populations, and the word of anxious inquiry rises to his lips, "Lord, they have no wine!"

"They have no wine!" My brethren, to have felt the needs of our fellow-men is to have come under the necessity of meeting them. We cannot have new feelings without, by that very fact, acquiring new responsibilities. We are responsible for the outlook to which our kindled emotions have made us sensitive. We cannot be as though we had never felt them. That is the peril of this increase of pity. If we fail to act upon it—to give it practical results—we become worse than if we had never been stirred. And it therefore becomes very urgent for us to ask ourselves what we are doing with this force so put into our hands. For sympathy is a force. The power to feel

is a power to act. It is a store of energy which could be set in use, could be discharged in this direction or in that; and if undischarged, it is wasted—it has been given in vain.

Where, then, is the discharge of that energy, which this intensified sensitiveness has stored, taking place? That is the question for us all. And, thank God, many can give a fair answer to it. In every direction we find men and women who are doing their best to carry wine to those who have none. This is most noticeable and encouraging, that so many who have received any gifts of good cheer themselves, of whatever kind, do hold them in fee for their fellows. They instinctively consider themselves to be in debt to those who have less. They are bound to bring their own advantages to market; they may not hoard them to themselves; they must put them to others' profit or others' service. They must carry them where they are wanted—to lighten dark places, to relieve the weary tediousness of work. They must distribute them, transfer them, share them. No man may take the gains which opportunity and good fortune and happy circumstance have brought him, and walk off with them without question or scruple, to enjoy them alone. That is what people recognize more and more day by day; that is the new conscience that is alive. And so we see every one who has any contribution to make to the general good cheer, whether it be a gift of song or of drama, or some skill in art or in athletics, or some helpful experience, or some special knowledge, whatever it be,—at any rate he offers it; he

is off with it to club, or hall, or institute, where it will pass out from him, and break, with a touch of radiance and warmth, the melancholy of neglected places.

This growth of a social conscience, answering to the sensitive impulse of pity, is full of hope. Yet one more stage is still wanted before all is sure. This conscience, to complete itself, must get past the stage of desultory and impulsive and sporadic efforts. Confined to these, it is certain to lapse and grow weary and flag. It must guard itself against its own reactions, recoils, disappointments, and failures. And, for this, it must summon to its aid the corrective succours of the intelligence, so that it may be conscious of wisdom directing and improving its efforts. It must do its task in a way that satisfies its mental criticism. Otherwise, the reason, left out of the business, will be for ever carping at this sentimentalism, will be for ever pointing a finger of scorn at the loose and irregular and casual attempts of this fitful humanitarianism. Conscience, once called into play, always aims at becoming intelligent, at corresponding to the demands of reason. It cannot go on with its work if it is conscious that the work is open to the charge of folly or of insecurity. It is prompted to act by feeling; but, once in action, it is always bent on finding for itself a ground more solid and lasting than feeling can supply.

The danger, then, of this social conscience lapsing through the desultory or accidental character of its attempts is a very real one. And it is in view of that most real danger that I will venture to plead before

you on behalf of one special effort that has been made to supply this upspringing conscience with an intelligent organization in a permanent and experienced institution. The Oxford House in Bethnal Green, of which many may have heard the name, has this great end in view—to gather together the forces that are from so many sides pressing to discover their own beneficial use, and to give them that intelligent direction which may distribute their efficacy with the richest profit. It secures to them the enormous advantages of permanence, of continuity, of co-operation. It lodges them at the places where their gifts will best avail. It disposes of them according to the methods of an experience which is always on the spot, always gaining in the accuracy with which it measures the needs and allots the work. There, in this House, any man who has any capacity of any kind to bring, finds himself put to use, and can be perfectly certain that that use is genuine. Any one who will read their annual report will be astonished at the variety and extent and interest of the work that is now in full career there.

And there is another characteristic of this institution which, indeed, more especially entitles me to speak of it here, in this cathedral. In bearing abroad good cheer to those otherwise overclouded with a forlorn monotony, it does not forget to Whom it was that the blessed mother carried her sensitive anxiety, as she looked up in His face and whispered, "They have no wine!" No; it is that same Lord, called to the table of man's earthly feast, in Whose

silent presence these young men of to-day still recognize the one Wisdom Who can meet the want; the one Master of Whom it can be said, at a moment of critical strain, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

"Whatsoever He saith"—that is the thing, the only thing, to be done. This is the deep conviction in which this Oxford House stands rooted. The wine that they bear to the cheerless folk may be but the fruit of an earthly vine; it may be but the various boons of a secular culture. But, then, the common right of all men to have those boons brought near to them springs from our common brotherhood in Christ. It is because all human life is made in Him a holy thing, that therefore every fragment of it has its claims to be considered, to be tended, to be fostered, to be given room, and air, and light, and joy. Christ endows them with this power of appeal.

And Christ, again, is the Source of the brotherly eagerness in those who have something to give, to share it with those that need it. It is because He has knit us all together in one, that we are pledged to Him to put out our powers to the use of our fellow-men, to hold ourselves in debt to them for all that it is in our hands to do on their behalf. Christ sets that pity, that conscience, moving, which cannot endure that we should enjoy our own good fortune to ourselves alone.

And as Christ is the secret Fount both of the right of those who need the cheer and also of the response of those who bring it, therefore at the Oxford House they think it well to lift His Name out of the secret places where He prompts, and to show it openly in-

scribed on their banner. For Him, for His service, they offer what they bring; to the fulfilment of His desire they dedicate it. To His sanction they turn; under the inspiration of His blessing they go in and out.

And in so doing, they, if they be loyal to their creed, avoid a moral peril which is but too apt to beset philanthropy. They shake off any touch or tone of assumption, of superiority, of benevolent complacency, of personal merit. How can they permit such a temper? They are not superior people who kindly condescend to shed a good influence abroad among their less fortunate neighbours. No, indeed; they are there in Bethnal Green, as fulfilling the plainest, simplest duty. Another has sent them, Whose errand they simply carry out. He has charged them with the distribution of certain good gifts of His own to them, of which they are the appointed purveyors. They are merely engaged to see that the cup goes round; that all who can shall take their share in that common heritage of human gladness which the good Father intends, as He bids His sun to shine and His rains to fall on all alike. It is a sheer necessity of their Christian position to play the part of good neighbours. If they can in any way help them they are bound to do it. That is all! The servants which drew the wine and bore it to the guests felt no merit, assumed no airs. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." That was the matter-of-fact direction under which they moved round the tables. And that sound, healthy, simple, unassuming direction is what still

governs the life of this Oxford House: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

That is not, indeed, the rule of an ascetic devotion, of a religious brotherhood. This body of workers does not pretend to the title in any way. That is a most noble ideal which others may be called upon to realize. But here it is rather in the honest simplicity of Christian gentlemen, who are expected to do their plain undeniable duty wherever it is shown them, that this community sets itself to obey the wholesome maxim, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

"They have no wine!" Still the plaintive cry rings on, haunting us with its pathos. When the black and biting winter strips this city of its last vestige of colour, of softness, of tenderness, of pity; as it pinches and starves the life down to its lowest and most forlorn level; as it lays its heavy hand on those whose monotonous drudgery never carries them beyond the menace of sickness and the risk of starvation; we feel more surely than ever the piteousness of a lot which never escapes from the wearisome anxiety of winning, moment by moment, its daily and necessary food. Such a life is hardly life at all. It is still savage until it has got its head above the immediate pressure of practical needs. The heart must be given freedom, the whole manhood must feel itself alive; there should be something of light, of expansion, of brightness. These are the pledges to men that they are not only toilers in a workshop, but children in a Father's home. God's witness of old to the heathen was that He ever filled their hearts, not only with food, but with gladness.

And Christ is here to make manifest that joyful Fatherhood. Christ is here, seated in our midst. And if, under the pressure of His presence, the needs of others have become more vivid to us, and we recognize with a sudden shock that they have no wine, and feel as if we too might bring them some help, some good cheer—something poor and cold and scanty, perhaps, yet which, given in His Name, might be transfigured as from water into wine,—if we are moved by such a desire, then let it not die away in the impotence of sentiment; let it be pledged to act as He requires. Listen, listen to the confirming voice of the Church, which is whispering in your ear, “Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.”

SERMON XIII.

THE LIMITS OF SPEED.

"We shall be like a tree planted by the water-side, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season."—Ps. i. 3.

WHEN men come to review the period in which you and I are living; when they look it over, and sum up its characteristic and typical significance; when they assign it its place in contrast and comparison with the period before and after, they will surely allot to it the note of pace.

All our invention, all our skill, varied and rich as it is, seems to issue at last in this one result—that it increases the ease of motion, of communication, of transit. In some way or another it brings near things that were far off. It negatives distance; it gets us over the ground; it abolishes material obstruction.

Steam, wire, tube, spark—these are ever being forced into yielding us a yet more rapid service. Either they hurry us off at yet sharper speed to any remotest corner of the earth which we would visit, or they toss us to and fro along the lines of our daily occupation with ever more magical ease, or they convey to us, while we stand still, knowledge for which we should,

without the aid of telegraph and telephone, have waited weeks and months to acquire. At any rate, in every form, the gain that we reap is a gain in speed. That which used to take a year takes a month; that which we could manage in a month now scarcely occupies a day; that which once would have absorbed a day in diligent search and toil is now transacted in the swift passage of a minute.

It is pace that has gained, and is still gaining. Now, what are the departments of our life, what are the conditions of our growth, to which pace is a good servant?

Obviously pace aids everything which belongs to the wider diffusion of materials. This is its foremost benefit. All that was locked up in separate compartments can be brought into general distribution by the greater facilities of rapid movement. All that was confined to the few at this spot or at that can now be scattered broadcast among the many. Things and persons, scenes and experiences, which of old were held apart by jealous barriers of necessity, are now brought into rapid contact and fusion. The divided treasures of the world find themselves transferred with ease into a common stock. Hither and thither, in and out, they pass unbindered, with the freedom of wide and elastic combinations. And thus the resources of civilization, the glories of art, are thrown more and more open to the disposal and use of the main multitude. It is the many that gain. Where few once travelled now all may go. The entire surface of the earth is laid open to the survey of all with ever-advancing

security. Wider and wider spreads the field of experience, of which all may have a share.

Pace, then, is democratic, it aids diffusion; and we can note this result most emphatically in the region of knowledge.

The characteristic effort of our day is that for the diffusion of knowledge. We have, indeed, our students, rare and high, who still spend their more solitary life in the splendid accumulation of knowledge. But students such as these there have always been at all ages, and our own time certainly cannot claim any unique credit to itself on this score. Nay, it may have certain qualms to trouble it. But what is noticeable is the devotion and the zeal with which our teachers act in the task of spreading the area which knowledge can cover. What we see is that men of good ability and of special attainment give themselves to the task of carrying about, far and wide, the best intellectual and literary culture of the day. Their impulse is not to store up honey in the hidden hive without asking what may be the issue of their labour, but to open out to as many as they can possibly reach the richest treasures of the scholar. The very best shall be given to all who will take it. Every door shall be thrown wide that all who will may enter. This is their inspiring motive. Let every willing eye and ear be brought into sight and hearing of all that is perfect, and excellent, and true, and good. Let nothing be hushed away in secret and privileged monopoly. Knowledge knows nothing of fear or favour. Her courts should be free. What to her are distinctions of class,

or wealth, or power? Nay, Wisdom should cry in the streets; in the chief places of concourse. She should stand in the top of every high place; by the way in the places of the path. She should call at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the door. "Unto you, O man, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Whoso is simple let him turn in hither; and him that hath understanding, let him eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled."

Here is an ideal; here is a noble ambition: it is sanctioned by this word of the Wise Man. And it is this open-hearted freedom which has been made possible by the mechanical swiftness with which the multitude can be brought into contact with the precious things that knowledge has stored. The communications are all open and rapid. The knowledge accumulated at the centres can be carried at any moment whither it will. The messengers can pass to and fro with the latest news. They can make all who will attend aware of what it is that the finest scholarship has just achieved in interpretation or discovery. These messengers of ours train themselves to give simplicity and clearness to that which has been with labour and difficulty won. They industriously sift out the most available material, and clean it and polish it and shape it, so that it may journey far with lightness and ease. Then, again, ever swifter and surer is the mechanism that multiplies the literature in which these results are packed for travel. Or, again, as with you who are here to-day,¹ you need

¹ Preached at Oxford before the summer gathering of the University Extension Students.

not wait in your distant homes to listen to the echoes of what is doing at the high places where Wisdom holds her court. But you can travel thither yourselves, and can wander in and out of her ancient chambers, and roam through her halls where her treasures lie stored, or can watch her, as it were, at her secret work, and can feel the charm of her fair palaces, and taste the breath of her gardens, and dream that you too have known the wonders of her gracious industries.

The diffusion of knowledge—the wide diffusion of the best knowledge—this is the task that is being fulfilled with such unparalleled power. And this task is a right and true one for us to undertake—for us to make specially our own, in this day ; just because it is the task for which the special development of rapid communication, which is the marked characteristic of the time, is eminently adapted. For it is the office of and duty of each age to turn to fullest service the peculiar advantage and opportunity put into its hands to use ; and our peculiar opportunity and advantage over all other ages lies in this speed.

Yes ! speed is our gift, and speed assists diffusion. Let us do our very best to put it to profit. Yet it may be well—it may be all the more needful—to recall what there is in us, which no mechanical means can do much to hurry, and which is least of all affected by any increase of pace. What is there ?—for, no doubt, if we do not take care to note it, we shall get into trouble with it. Either we shall ignore it altogether, while our excited attention is absorbed

by the bustle and the heat of that which is pushing forward with all its might. Or we shall be disappointed and angry at the lack of all apparent energy and movement in that which fails to get forward with the rest. We shall attribute to it unmerited failure; we shall suspect something wrong where all is really as it should be. We shall become impatient and anxious over a poverty of growth which, in comparison with the fertile advance made all round it, seems hampered and slow; while, all the time, this slowness is essential to its proper character.

Let us see, then, what there is. And, first, it is obvious that, in the sphere of knowledge there is a gift, a faculty, which cannot, by any device, be hurried.

Intellectual insight and intellectual judgment—this, in all its higher forms, in which it attains to individual independence, whether critical or creative, this is a thing which must grow slowly. The power to detect good and bad workmanship; the power to pronounce on the real value of a literary product; to put the finger down on the rare and fine elements, and account for their rarity and sift out their finer touches—this is a power, dear people, which cannot be handed over from one person to another; it cannot be passed about or packed up in a parcel or bustled off by the post. It does not submit to the rapid processes of diffusion, of which we have been speaking. It cannot be picked up by a saunter through the libraries of a university. No! slowly, very slowly, it must be grown—it must be imbibed. It cannot be excused

any stage in the steps of its proper formation. It must have gone over, for itself, all the material, all the experiences, which go to its final working. It cannot obtain these secondhand from others. For it is the vital passage through these experiences and materials which alone qualifies it to deliver its judgments. Such a passage, above all in our day, when the material to be traversed has become so vast and so varied, so ancient and so far-reaching, so delicate and so excellent and so rich, cannot but take time—yes, a long, long time. Mechanical rapidities can do something to ease it; they can convey the materials to the student's hand; they can throw them into shape for his use; they can fit him with tools and instruments, with indices, and glossaries, and lexicons; but there they stop. The passage itself must still be made by the student himself; and it is long; and it is difficult; and, moreover, time is essential to its success. The mind must win familiarity, intimacy, with the literature set before it; it must brood and ponder; it must exercise itself in literary habits; it must breed in itself literary instincts; it must have leisure to pause and assimilate and digest. Far from it being possible to hurry it, hurry is fatal to it; it requires to be free from the sense of haste. It must have its quiet seasons in which to stand off, to lie fallow, to store its resources, to adapt them to its own inner construction. So alone can be built up and trained, a cultivated insight—an intellectual conscience.

Nothing can take the place of a process such as

I have described. You will not, I know, deceive yourselves into thinking that you have acquired such a faculty of critical judgment by the delight that you here, at Oxford, enjoy in appreciating this judgment as it is exercised, on your behalf, by those who lecture to you. They have won it in various degrees—won it by no rapid process, but by years of patient and unskipped labour. And now that they have it, you can appreciate its exercise in them. You can follow them as they skilfully disclose to you what is excellent and lovely in the great standard glories of literature or art; you can follow the brilliant discoveries exhibited to you by the scientific professors; you can see how, and why, and wherefore the events all happened as they did, as you listen to the student of history, who lays out before you the causes, the motives, the councils that were at work in and about the changing circumstances of the times.

Yes! this is delicious, this is helpful. But you will not suppose that you have, by your appreciation of this skill when exercised by others, acquired the art to exercise it for yourself. You can follow his judgment, but you will come to speedy grief if you try to follow your own. You can see quickly what he means, as he passes you over the ground by which he has reached his conclusions. But that is quite another matter from being able to do that which he did, for yourself.

“Ah, Mr. Ruskin,” said an over-ready disciple to our Oxford teacher, “the first moment that I entered the gallery at Florence I saw at once what you meant

in asserting the supremacy of Botticelli." "Did you? in a moment? dear me!" answered the master, "and it took me twenty years to find it out!"

That is a story to remember. What it emphasizes is the contrast which I would beg you to keep in mind between the capacity to understand and enjoy the truths that another has discovered and the actual possession of the critical faculty by which the other discovered those truths.

It is the first of these which can be widely and rapidly diffused. Many can quickly appreciate and delight in the precious discoveries that high study wins; and again mechanical devices can richly assist mankind at large, by diffusing far and wide the apprehension of these discoveries. All this is possible; it is good; let us recognize it to the full. But the study that goes to bring about those discoveries!—oh, do not let us for a moment suppose that, in a matter like that, we shall ever do very much to hasten the pace or to widen the range. The few will still, alone, do it—the few who have the special and rare gifts for the labour. The few will do it; and they will always do it slowly.

The Intellectual Conscience—that is our first exception; and the very term suggests carrying our thoughts further. For the phrase is chosen in order to declare that this temper of the scholar has a distinctly ethical value. It is moral qualities that go to its making. In its own field of literary excellence it is exercising, in its discrimination between good and bad work, a power akin to conscience in its judgment over right and wrong. That fineness and delicacy of intellectual

apprehension, that literary sensitiveness, that haunting pursuit of ideal excellence which constitute the scholar,—these are a display of character; and character is a moral growth. And, my brethren, is not this a sufficient reason why the growth of the student must be slow? For all moral character is slow in its formation. Here, again, we touch a region in which we are forced to lay aside all hopes of any great increase of pace in the work. No mechanism can accelerate the speed, just because in morals we are concerned with an interior growth, for which all mechanical means must be hopelessly inadequate. Effort from within, self-determined effort—this is the essence of the business. Nothing can excuse us it. Effort, prolonged into a self-determined habit—this is the very heart of all moral character. And habits are slow to grow.

And then, again, the growth of character involves for fallen man the purging of some evil ingrained matter—the recurrent struggle for a hard-won freedom. Ah! and this recurrence will be wearily long, and this struggle bitterly slow. Yes, the winning of a good conscience, of a high character, this is a work which lies beyond the frontier within which we may expect to see the victories of speed or the rapid possibilities of diffusion.

And is it not because of the failure to recall this, that we have been subject to much vain illusion, followed by much angry disappointment? The rapid diffusion of knowledge has again and again tempted us to expect an equally rapid diffusion of virtue. Knowledge ought to have moral effects, so we felt

sure; and we were right, only we failed to allow for the difference in pace. Knowledge might flash in upon the dark places; but the moral regeneration which the light of knowledge was bound to evoke—how terribly it lagged behind, how pitifully scanty the fruits that we reaped, how heart-breaking the relapses! Again and again it would seem as if nothing had been changed at all by the wider knowledge, so slow, so broken, so ragged was the advance. Yes, slow, broken, ragged, laggard—that it was; but that it must be;—why be disheartened? Why be staggered? Diffused knowledge is one thing; moral regeneration is another. The first is attainable by help of mechanical speed, the other is incapable of such help. The diffusion of knowledge widens and aids the possibilities of moral regeneration. This is its supreme importance. But the possibilities have yet got to be realized and attained; and that attainment cannot but be difficult, wearisome, uneven, slow. It cannot be done in the mass; it must be done man by man, will by will, individual by individual; it must be done by the painful effort, which by laborious recurrence succeeds at last in building up a new moral habit. Why be so surprised to find that this is very long, or very slow?

No! let us never be beguiled into supposing that anything of deep moral worth can be rapidly manufactured. The upward thrust of the power that builds up our moral character is bound to be gradual, monotonous, prolonged. The forces that feed it are deep and lengthy and far-fetched. Slowly the moral fabric

wins its way to strength, to persistence, to fulfilment. "Like a tree planted by the water-side," it will not submit to be hurried; it cannot bring forth its fruit except in orderly sequence, and for those who will await the due season.

And, my brethren, all the more will this be so when we come to its finest and rarest issue—the spiritual character of the perfected Christian. Slow, indeed, and long will be the preparatory discipline before the height can be reached; there will be patient, recurrent effort, and serious and untiring industry; and love that waits and watches; and courage that purges and prunes; and secret faithfulness, that drinks deep of the beneficent water through hidden roots. All this is a slow business. And in its highest form it will always be attained only by the few. It will be rare in its gifts and opportunities; rare in endurance, and severity, and persistence, and resolution.

Very rare! And this is why I would venture to remind you of the peril that must beset us. In a day of rapid diffusion we are sure to be tempted to undervalue anything that cannot be easily and speedily manipulated—anything that cannot be turned to the obvious and immediate profit of great multitudes. We shall be tempted to regard the average; and wide and quick diffusion of knowledge raises and enlarges the general average. An immense mass of people are made the better by it. The better! That is what diffusion does. And that is its justification. The better—yes. But no one of them all can by such a process be brought up to the level of the very best.

And yet, good as it is for many to be bettered, believe me, we cannot afford in moral matters to go without the very best. It would be a terrible day if we were once content with a fair average character all round, and cared not at all for those few rare, perfect souls who make for some high spiritual goal far beyond our ken, and win out of some secret treasure-house of God a moral beauty, incomparable and unique. Like stars, single and bright, they are alone in the night. They break out in sudden loveliness, like fair flowers amid the common grass. Alone they seem, and separate; and yet they are of us; they are ours; their gifts shed honour upon all. The dark night itself is made glorious by the stars that shine in it. The meadow-grass wears its green more honourably for the flowers that rarely stud it. Separate, high, wonderful souls! These we must have among us; these we must prize above all. They are the salt of the earth. They preserve to mankind its dignity, its purity, its tone. By them standards are upheld; banners are lifted; trumpets are blown; men's hearts are moulded; lives are transfigured; souls are thrilled. No diffused average of intelligence and goodness would compensate for the loss of these few, who are the saints of God.

One name will you suffer me to recall—the name of one who combined in himself all the special excellences on which we have dwelt? Richard William Church, the late Dean of St. Paul's, had that exquisite touch of the finished scholar of which we spoke; and this excellence of the scholar was, obviously, in him the outcome of qualities that were distinctively moral in

character; and, again, this moral temper clearly, in him, proceeded out of a background of spiritual forces—forces that were definitely religious in origin, in motive, in aim, in aspiration. There he was, the perfected type of an intellect and a will surrendered to the discipline of Christ; and as we looked on him and lived by his side, we knew well that his peculiar grace was worth more, far more, to the world at large than it could ever fully gauge—more, far more, than all the minor average excellences that were strewn thick around us. These we must have, no doubt. But his rare loveliness—ah! that was our inspiration, our gladness. That was beyond price; it could not be had for rubies or for coral. To have seen it and known it was to win possession of an ideal that changed our estimate of life. No accumulation of lower attainments in the many could have done for mankind what this one spiritual achievement effected by its solitary supremacy.

Yet who could look at it and doubt how slow had been the process by which it had been won—how slowly and how patiently the tree had grown by the water-side, before, in its due season, it had brought forth its fruit?

Dearly beloved, it is not, you know well, that I do not desire to see you utilize to the widest extent all the opportunities and power that speed can bring to men in the mass. God's blessing be on this marvellous gift of speed that can spread abroad so far and so easily the treasures that of old were so confined or partial in their use. Only I desire that in doing one good thing

you should not suppose that you had done another. And I would challenge you here in God's sight—in the name of Christ, the Word and Wisdom of God—not to forget, or ignore, or despise the pearls of great price that must, perforce, be slow in their making, and cannot but be rare in their perfection.

You will not, I beseech you, ever coarsely undervalue the precious gifts of which we have spoken together this morning in Oxford—the scholar's insight, the trained delicacy of the moral character, the spiritual wisdom of the saint. Rather, by what you have learned here, you will better estimate the wonder of those high and special excellences, even as those who have climbed above wood and upland in the Alps, and have touched the skirts of the higher snows, know better than when they crept along the valleys the mystery of that silence in which the great peaks abide, awful and withdrawn. You will learn here how to reverence more fitly than which is best. You will have a standard by which to recognize how fine and rare it is. You will be hushed into humility. Nay, you will be humbly stirred to wonder whether you yourself may not, after long labour and unhurried discipline, be taught to taste a little of those deep waters, on whose banks these calm and patient trees are planted, which never fail to bring forth their fruit in due season.

SERMON XIV.

THE PRINCIPLE OF PRAYER.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you.”—ST. JOHN xvi. 23.

HUMAN life is the expression of a want. Its inner movement is desire for something unattained. Herein lies its radical distinction from the layers of lower life from out of which it lifts itself. The plant and the animal have a limited or fixed range of necessary needs which they set themselves to secure, or else they perish. These secured, they have done; the type is settled; the years come and go, and there is no novel appetite, no push of inward want, no change in habit or in structure; when once the fitting equipoise is reached, development is practically stayed. But in man, so soon as the instinct of civilization touches him, so soon as his proper manhood begins to work, there appears a power of raising his demands upon life, a power of progressive desire, which uses the satisfaction of the immediate and necessary needs only as a vantage-ground from which to extend the range and variety of his wants. Each fresh rise in this satisfaction does but increase and intensify the capacity of desiring. The higher the level reached, the wider

and richer and more illimitable is the world of possibilities that opens out above, around, beneath him. Each satisfaction attained renders him less and less satisfied; it does but whet his ambition. His restlessness, his movement, his progress, do but grow more urgent; and in this very urgency, in this very necessity for unceasing advance, in this ever-widening aspiration, lies his work, his life, his joy, his fulfilment. This is civilization. It is the ever-growing demand which man is for ever making upon life to fulfil his ever-rising possibilities. Ever he calls upon earth and sea and sky to do more for him than they have ever done before. Ever he forces from out of their hidden stores novel treasures; ever he dives and hunts and digs, to discover and drag out secrets that may endow him with new capacities and disclose to him fresh opportunities.

Man is ever asking; it is his very life to ask more and more; it is his proper growth to improve and to enlarge and to fertilize and to vary his faculty of right asking. And this is one deep ground-reason why prayer belongs to the stuff of human life. This incessant demand is not to be the mere blind pressure of some mechanical force. It is to be reasonable, human, spiritual, concise. It is to recognize itself, and to regulate itself, and to direct itself. It is to put itself out in words; it is to pray.

And, again, this asking is to be no selfish greed for more; but to be the intelligent motion of a being endowed with a purpose, summoned to a task. The pressure of the force compelling man to go forward is

the witness to a command that bids him "be fruitful and multiply, and have dominion over the plants and the birds and every creeping thing." He is to move, and grow, and climb, and aspire, because there is a voice ever behind him, guiding, impelling: "This is the way; walk ye in it." He is to expect more and more of the earth; to demand an ever-richer response to his efforts; not with the temper of an intoxicated tyrant, hungry with a selfish passion to absorb all into himself, but with the free and elastic hope of a child set down in a Father's domain, for whom all that the Father hath is his; and he is to see all, and taste all, and know all, and rule all, because he is the heir, and is hungry to enter into all the secrets of the Father's mind, and the wonders of the Father's mansion, and the splendour of the Father's hopes. Therefore his untiring demands must look ever upward to the Father's face. His endless asking is bound to break out from his lips in unceasing prayer to Him from Whom alone all good gifts must come.

Human life, then, is a life of growth, of growing desire, a life of asking, a life of prayer. But what a strange and bewildering noise is this actual prayer as it ascends from an unregenerate world into the ears of the great God! What a hubbub of requests! What a jumble of contradictory demands! It forms no steady and intelligent appeal—an appeal built up by disciplined experience, taking wise and careful measure of the achievements that are, one by one, disclosing their possibility; counting the needful resources; serious in the consciousness of a Divine task.

Alas! this is not the appeal that moves up from man towards God—the appeal of a trustful child anxious to be loyal to the Father's wish—an appeal inspired by that veracity and security which the perfect understanding of responsive mutual love alone can ensure.

No! sin has disturbed the even flow of man's desires. They no longer set themselves along the steady channels that would bear them onward toward their destined place. They have got swollen and have overleaped their border, and are turbid and violent and rash. And the voices that rise from these loose floods are broken and turbulent and hoarse. Man has lost the secret of asking, and the demands he makes on God are the issue of a bewildered heart, of a distracted will. He asks, but knows not what he asks. No moral standard governs and trains his expectations of what God may do for him, or of what he may fitly make request before God. So the earth is asteam with a huddled swarm of prayers, without purpose, without honour, without worth. The asking reflects the mere passion of the asker. Here it is the loud, protesting, angry outcry of a clamorous will, worsted in its pride. There it is the strong and manful demand of cheerful health, that counts on obtaining long life, and good days, robust success, and prolonged cheerfulness. Here, again, it is the scream of terror, or the wild outbreak as of a wounded animal robbed of its prey, barred from its attack. Or, yet again, it may be the complaint of a heart that is jaded and sore and bruised, and which pines and withers in sad bewilderment. Or sometimes it is wilful sin, that will have, at all costs, that enticing

evil to which it has surrendered its soul, and will dare to appeal to God, in its blindness, to serve its lusts, to satiate its appetites.

So man asks—out of the corruption of his heart his mouth speaketh. Even his best petitions are mingled with that which distorts and debases them. Rarely, very rarely, does there enter into God's ears, amid this tumultuous mob of besieging cries, the high and pure prayer, unalloyed and undistracted, of a will that is bent on the task to which God has set it.

So man prays. And his prayers, moreover, use such strange methods of enforcing their demands. The religions of heathendom are the shapes in which his prayers have clothed themselves; they build up the fashion of the appeal to which God the Father listens. He listens, while men ring their fetish-idol round with ghastly dances, uncouth and gross, and rouse it with the maddening monotony of throbbing drums. These are the prayers ascending from the children of men to the Father which is in heaven. So pathetic is the contrast between the mind of the seekers and the mind of Him Whom they seek!

Or they enforce their claims by childish invocations, by charms, by bewitchments, by incantations, by devilries; or they strive helplessly to win an answer by cutting themselves with knives; or they raise bloody altars, and bring, as pledges of their needs, the bodies of their sons and of their daughters. Yes! they will even pass their children through the fire, if by that they may wring an answer from an obstinate God; so fierce is their need; and it may be

that "he is talking; or he is in a journey; or per-adventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."

So strange, so wild, are the blunderings of man's prayers. So cruel has been the story to which he has compelled God to hearken. Within it all, indeed, repellent as is the surface picture, has worked the desire of the child to know its Father which is in heaven; and God, in merciful recognition of this half-stifled desire, and in view of that blessed day when the one true Son should stand upon the earth and lift before His throne the one perfect intercession,—God, in His mercy, endured in patience the weary years, and did not wholly turn away from these bewildered petitions. Looking to that Lamb yet to be slain, He tolerated the appeal of bleeding bulls and goats, and accepted the zeal that offered, though it were clouded, and suffered His voice to be heard about men's ways, even though the medium through which it passed was so obscure. "The times of this ignorance He winked at," content if, while leaving Himself not without witness even amid the multitudes of heathen, He could, over and beyond this, lift the fashion of men's habitual appeals to Him into some nearer harmony with His own inner will, in the temple service of the one people through whom He prepared the advent of the Mediator and Intercessor.

So it had been. But now, at last, there is to be a change. Now this chaos of petitions is to be reduced to form and order. A principle is to assert itself over this loud wrangle, which shall sift, and test, and sort,

and ordain, until this swarm of noises is built together into an articulate and honourable speech.

The Name of Jesus! That is the energy which shall move over the face of these heaving waters, so formless and so void; and shall give out the clear creative utterance, under the plastic stress of which the light shall dawn, and the shapes grow distinct, and the ordered fabric draw together into a seemly whole.

“Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you.” “My Name!” His Name is to put all man’s askings to their proper proof. Here is the infallible standard by which they gain entry into the Father’s ears. Now we know how to ask, and what to ask. Before, we tossed up any passionate need that throbbed in our breast. The passing want, the shifting hope—it was enough that we felt it, to pray God to fulfil it; and, to make our request good, we did this or that, which some dim tradition authorized or blind instincts prompted. We ran with fruit or flowers, or we muttered charms, or we slew a bullock, and poured out its blood. Who knows? Perhaps God will not listen unless we force Him to attend. We will make our prayers so long that we must be heard for our much speaking. We will cry very loud, for fear He does not hear. We will do the things that seem to please Him, lest He be angry, or malicious, or unkind. So it had been. It was all a dark, doubtful experiment.

But now we know! The Name of Jesus must determine all. Under that Name alone can a petition be

sanctioned. The force of that Name can alone win it favourable hearing. All other religions that offer to bring our requests home to God are abolished in this one word. They had advised this and recommended that; they had claimed a peculiar right of entry, each for its own receipt. But all their methods, devices, receipts, are stripped of their merit. There is only one way of asking: it is "in the Name of Jesus Christ." There is the great religious discovery; that is the new secret, at the hearing of which all heathen faiths are to perish. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name. Ask, and receive, that your joy may be full."

"The Name of Jesus" brings its power to bear upon our requests in three special ways.

Firstly, it is redemptive; it wins them worth. Our poor blind wants, that we bring before God, are, in themselves, so beside the mark. We have lost the instinct of asking aright. We have let selfishness and wilfulness and dishonourable appetites disturb our spiritual insight, so that we no longer follow the right cue, nor perceive what it is that we chiefly lack, nor throw out our hopes in the right direction. We cannot make our petitions tally with the deep rule that governs all Christian prayer—the rule that our heavenly Father knows what we need before we ask. He knows exactly. He never requires to be told; He knows, and He waits only to give out just what our being wants, the moment we give Him His chance by opening to Him our desire for it. Our desire for the thing that we need is the only doorway by which it can win its way inside us. Until

we desire it the entry is barred. So God pauses at our soul's doors, knowing all that we have need of, holding all in perfect readiness. If only we could open the channel; if only we could feel the want of it, and, feeling the lack, desire it; and, desiring it, ask in prayer for it! And we—we go pressing some silly, some pitiful request. We stumble, we grope; we want this and hunger for that, and all is wrong; and never will we utter the cry that God's heart yearns to hear, and would leap to answer. We miss it, we go round it, we mistake it; we do everything but detect it. And ever we pour our unavailing prayers—all for the wrong thing! And ever we grow more anxious, flurried, angry, because God cannot answer them—because He and we cannot run together into one will and one responsive act. And then, all prayer seems useless, and aimless, and unaccountable, and perplexing!

So we still pray!—we—poor, bewildered, faithless sinners, children of the covenant though we be. And, if that were all, if we were alone, our prayers could make but little way—could not but be sadly ineffectual and stupid and disappointing. But over all our mixed prayer now stands “the Name of Jesus.” That Name never enters the Father's ears without His whole power of love going out to meet and to grant it. At the sound of that blessed Name all the Father's heart is aglow, and every current of affection is set running, and freely flows. And now “that Name” is identified with us. It is sealed upon us. It covers us round. It spreads itself out over us. It lays hold of each one of us brought within the folds of its baptism.

It draws us within the range of its warmth. It fastens on us; it encompasses us. It binds us into its own life by ties and bonds that build us up into the one Body. There we lie ensconced. Its identity pervades us; its force overflows us. We are in Jesus, Jesus is in us, His Name is ours. He is not ashamed to gather us all up into His own personality. And now, therefore, our requests, in their silly blindness, go up inside His. They enter into heaven through His mouth—from His lips. They are endowed with the honour of His breath. He takes them from us, and makes them His own. So they are purged of their unworthiness, they are stripped of their contempt. Their miserable incompetency is forgiven them. They are redeemed from their natural shame. Over and above their thin beseechings pleads the unfaltering voice of His mighty intercession. They are become acceptable in the Beloved. The love which God the Father sheds eternally on the Son overflows over all that the Son has made His own. We can only picture by dull images the deep effect of this Redemption; but we can at least suspect what it may mean, if we picture the Father as listening to our poor prayers, in spite of their meanness, with just the same attention, lovingkindness, devotion, with which He would listen to Jesus Christ Himself. How differently must our prayer sound if He hears in our voices as we pray the voice of His beloved Son! Such power does the Name of Jesus lend to our askings.

Ought not this to be a real comfort, giving us confidence in our praying? Do we not need it?

So far we feel from the centre of things; so hopelessly small, insignificant, powerless; so ignorant, so short-sighted, so shut out! In such grim silence we kneel. Who can attend to us, and what is it we should say? And what is for our good? And what is it we, in our heart of hearts, really want? And if we knew, and could utter it, what good would it do? So we cower and faint. And yet, feeble and stammering as are our lips, we are "in the Name of Jesus" as we pray—inside His Name. Not outside in the cold, battering at a closed door, besieging a remote and hidden God. But within the Name!—within the heat which His love sheds; already admitted, already beloved, before we pray; listened to as those who are already embraced by the affections. For though God's holiness could not love us for ourselves alone, He can love us when His own Son, Jesus Christ, is added to us. We and the Lord Jesus, summed together in one thing, are a delight towards which His heart outflows. And with that heart glowing and outflowing, He hearkens to our petition and bends His ear to our prayers.

We pray "in the Name." It is not only redemptive, in winning for us a favourable hearing; but it is regulative also, in fashioning our prayer. Now that we are come within the engrossing energy of that living Name, we must conform our requests to its nature, to its model. We must suffer the Name of Jesus to pass over our anxious questionings, our feverish needs, and instil into them its own order, its coolness, its steadiness, its perseverance, its comeliness, its rhythm.

Its governing force will train and select, and prune and modify. Not all the hungry desires of our souls will it authorize or further. To much it will refuse its sponsorship. It will forgive and pause and be patient and pity, as hot words pour from our lips. But it will not be satisfied with passing over and forgiving; it will aim at better things; it will wait until the fit of impatient longing is done, and it can repress much that is unseemly, and can purge out much that is poisonous, and can straighten much that is crooked. It will wait for us to learn how to pray better, with calmer purpose, with more faithful insight. Our wants depend on our character, and as our inner character yields to the better discipline of the Name, our wants will signalize the growing change. They will become more conformable to the mind of Christ. More and more we shall grow accustomed to refer our petitions to the Name. We shall be more on the watch to ask, Would my Lord Jesus pass this prayer of mine? Is it one that I could beg Him to approve and to further? Could I fancy Him offering it on my behalf? Could I imagine myself framing it into those very words in His presence? Can I genuinely ask the Father to receive it, as from the lips of Jesus Himself? Is my prayer of that kind? So alone do I pray "in His Name." So alone will what I ask for be surely given me.

and
My brethren, it is not very often in the perplexities of our private lives that we can win this strong comfort of knowing that our prayer entirely conforms to the mind of Jesus Christ.

But, to-day,¹ I am desired by your Bishop to remind you that there is a wide and deep prayer for help going up before God from Christ's Church in London, a prayer which no hesitating qualification can lay under suspicion. It is a prayer that can hardly but be tuned to the very key in which it should best go up before the throne; a prayer dear to the heart of Jesus; a prayer into which His own will, His own affections, His own desires, can throw themselves without reserve. For it is the prayer of His own people, of His own chosen and appointed Church, that His Name may be hallowed among them who now are denied its succour; that His mercy, His truth, His lovingkindness, may not be shut up behind ugly and cruel bars, but may find a free way given them through which to break out, and may reach and touch those who need them sorest—the poor, the blind, the halt, the maimed, the desolate, the forsaken. It is the prayer that, in a Christian city, covered by the beneficent profession of Christian parishes, there should not be thousands upon thousands to whom no news of any such blessed privilege ever travels; on whom the kindly hand of Christ is never laid, to bid them turn and come; on whom no inviting voice ever falls, promising rest for their souls who are most weary and heavy-laden. It is the prayer that this shame should end—that where Christ's Church professes to be, there it should actually be found; that its cry should at least be heard in the streets by those who will hear; that its boons should at least be offered to those who would

¹ Preached on behalf of the Bishop of London's Fund.

take. So long as the Bishop of London's Fund exists it is a confession that not even this much is yet done. For the fund only exists in order to remedy the lack of the absolute and essential ministries. It acts only where there is a sheer want of all that can bring the gospel news within range of the people. It acts only where, without it, there would be no practical witness for its risen Lord made by the Church at all. It confines itself to this. It never passes beyond the work which is absolutely obligatory, if the Church in London is to be a reality, and not a mere name.

Here, then, is a prayer into which the very breath of our Lord is poured. His own Name, His own honour, is at stake. It is His own love which is hindered and ashamed. It is His own life which is athirst; for He yearns over these impotent folk. And, alas! He cannot get at them—cannot even go out on the hillsides to search for the lost. We deny Him even the poor loaves and scanty fish, which He might bless and break for the hungry who have wandered so far and are fainting by the way.

Here is a prayer—prayed, indeed, in the full force of His Name! And it is ours to-day to plead this prayer, ours to pledge our pleading before God by the gifts with which we enforce it.

I implore you, give what you can, and all you can, simply as a witness to the heart, to the passion with which you send up this prayer, through Jesus, to God. Let it be no weak, indefinite prayer, costing no effort. No, but a prayer of power, that Christ's Name may be glorified; a prayer, backed with a will, backed with a

solid proof that with all your soul you pray it. Your offering is itself the prayer.

You cannot heal this vast and terrible disorder. God alone has resources and strength for that. You can but invoke His almighty Fatherhood. But the invocation should be no mere sigh, no mere passing breath, no mere plaintive confession. It should be a real, solid, positive act of sacrifice—the sacrifice of what you would like to keep, only that the love of God constraineth you, and therefore you cast it down into the treasury of God, in the zeal of your passionate prayer that God may look down in pity upon His people, and may make known here in London the Name of His Christ.

SERMON XV.

LENT.

“And there went great multitudes with Him; and He turned and said, Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.”—ST. LUKE xiv. 25-27.

LENT is here again: and once more the shadows begin to strike across the sunlit Hope that was born on Christmas Day; once more there begins to be a sense of trouble abroad; the air thickens with ugly rumours of ill. And in the face of it, and, perhaps, with special force in a University,¹ there stirs in us a movement of opposition, of repugnance. Our natural instincts fret and protest against the enforced discipline.

There is, first, the instinctive protest of our boyhood as it passes upward into youth; everything in us is at the moment in bud, is on the tiptoe of expectation, is telling of advance, is impatient of check or bar. It is not in the mood to understand the lifted forefinger which warns and threatens. What is it all about, we ask, this serious talk, this mournful muttering? Why this anxiety, this chill, this depression, this urgency? Why this onslaught on human gladness? this maiming of our healthy and springing manhood? Why this

¹ Preached before the University, at Great St. Mary's, Cambridge.

dull and stupid insistence on merely negative excellences? This is not what we look for from religion. Faith should hearten and sanctify life; and life should mean expansion; and the world was made very good; and our bodies were given us for pure and fair service. Religion should enter, so we fancied, to sanction all that is excellent, and lovely, and of good report; it should come to encourage, and to enlarge, and to gladden, and to sweeten, and to fulfil, and to crown. Was not this the good news of peace and good will to all men? Was not this the message of the Incarnation? God is come in the flesh, to hallow and transfigure all that is most human; to give it all worth and dignity and purpose. This was the significance of His Epiphanies; we were ready to look for Him to manifest His glory through the humanity that we surrendered to Him; we trusted to Him to flush our imperfect offering with the glow and the heat of His new wine; we were prepared to lay at His feet the richest outcome of our happy days—our gold and frankincense and myrrh.

But just as we begin to apprehend what faith might mean to us as the hallowing of human life, down there falls upon us this cold shadow of restraint, this Lenten talk, with its unworthy anxieties, its morbid fears, its tiresome and unmanly rules; with all that is most repellent, and ungenerous, and timorous, and repressive.

At a certain point in our growth it is impossible not to be sensible of this disappointment; not to formulate some such complaint. And it would be wrong if we did not feel this disagreeable shock of repug-

nance. For the severer teaching of Christianity presupposes some such experience as that which actually and historically preceded it.

The Christian Creed, in its assertion of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, was not the creed of a young world, fresh with the dew of that morning when God pronounced it to be very good, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. It was not the faith of primitive or patriarchal days, when all was still new and simple and delightful. No! the world was old when Christ was born into it; He entered in to meet the needs of an earth that had long ago been wearied with disappointment, and had sickened with disgust. The youth of the race was already lost or broken; the ugly disfigurement of age was upon it; man was long past the day when he could look forward to taking life in his stride. Very dark was his outlook; very miserable was his memory of inward wrong. The earth was old, and man's heart was old, and the faith that was brought near to him in that dismal hour bore in it, therefore, of necessity, the seriousness and the grimness of age. How, indeed, could such a man have responded to a creed that spoke only of some cheerful and light-hearted promise? It would have seemed to him but as an idle and a mocking tale. For he had been shown the bitter sides of life, and he could not be startled to find in the creed that offered to deal with that life a tone of patience, of austerity, of melancholy, of anguish. There is ugly work ahead if his past is to be undone, and he knew it; there will be some bad hours of dreadful anxiety before the

clutch of his sin is loosened, before the disease is purged from out his bones. And to face such hours there must of sheer necessity be a girding of the loins and a bracing of nerves, a slow discipline, a penitent watchfulness, a weary preparation, a day, long and dull, of fasting and of prayer.

Any one who has ever felt his youthfulness begin to die out and away from him; any one who has known the bitterness with which his early and best hopes break themselves against the dead set of facts, and under the folly of his own sin, is prepared for all this business of Lent. He understands the voices that are speaking to him; he has intelligence of their suspicions; his ears are open to the low mutterings of alarm. He is not repelled or afraid as "the laughing loves" that ran so freely about the base of the Cup of Life are being withdrawn, and in their place "skull-things, in order grim, grow out about the rim." His earlier ideal fades, and he sadly watches it go, and yet it is not all loss he feels; there is a new call which speaks of a higher and a stronger task that is opening out upon him. Losing much, he will yet gain more. "Grow old along with me," the message is ever whispering to his soul.

"The best is yet to be !
Grow old along with me !"

Yet this experience cannot ever be fully anticipated. We may warn, we may forestall it as well as we may, but each soul must still repeat for itself the story of the race. Each must run forward in the old hopefulness, to renew, in his own person, the old blunder, the old

stumble, the old dismay. Until life brings its later experiences, the young cannot quite believe that the traditional fall is ever really going to happen to them. And, therefore, to them the Creed on its darker side will always have something in it that disappoints and repels. We who propose to interpret the Creed to them can but wait for the day which will absolutely justify it to their own personal lives; and, in the mean time, can appeal to the obvious harmony between our Creed and the facts of human life, as they stand recorded on every side.

Do these facts answer, we may ask them, to our boyish anticipations? Does life, as we see it about us,—does it fall into the mould of our young hopes? Is it all hearty, and healthy, and cheerful, and tolerant? Does it look as if it would work out on the lines of free, spontaneous expansion for all the natural instincts? Has it nothing in it which nips and crushes any confidence in such a development of man as belongs to the tree planted by the water-side, that brings forth its fruit in due season?

Surely nothing in the Christian insistence on Cross or Passion is more repellent, or austere than the witness of hard and naked facts. And Christianity is, above all things, real. It grapples with facts; it lays itself alongside of the earth as it actually is. It stretches itself over our sickly and perishing humanity, as Elisha over the body of the boy, hand to hand, foot to foot, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes. This manhood in us, as we know it, and see and feel and touch it—with its infinite pathos, with its broken aspirations, with its

beauty lying chilled and benumbed and stricken—it is this, and not another, which the breath of the Lord and the heat of the Lord will cover and quicken and heal. Christianity is nothing if it is not real—if it does not lie level with actual experience. And facts disappoint; therefore the Creed disappoints. Facts disfigure and belabour and beat under; therefore the Creed speaks of disfigurement, of keeping under the body, of bruising and wounding. Facts startle us with the conviction of our strange impotence; therefore the Creed surprises us with the severity of its accusation. Facts are intolerant of wrong; and the Creed comes to no terms with sin. Facts are terrible; and the Creed has its terrors.

And, if this be so, then we can but beg of you, while still the glow and the glory of living are with you, not to be discomfited because there are matters included in the Christian Creed that do not yet, and cannot yet, commend themselves to you. There is much experience that still awaits you in life, of a wholly different type to that which now is your main portion and lot; and the Creed has got to cover all the experience ahead of you as well as that within the bounds of which you now stand.

It does not force upon you the sterner stress, before it be time. It can be very patient with you: it will wait until you come to it, point by point. For it is content to minister to each stage of our growth. It greets the child in us, with the freedom and the fragrance of the birth at Bethlehem. It responds to our first youth with its Epiphany in the Temple, laying

its sanction, by that scene, on the sudden and absorbing passion of mental inquiry, enthralled by which the soul may forget mother and home; or again in the Epiphany of the Marriage Feast, when it pours its transfiguring energy into our human joys. Then, as our practical manhood realizes and faces its task amid the work-a-day world of man, it challenges its vigorous and confident conscience with the moral law laid down in the Sermon on the Mount; or, perhaps, it bids it rise to the noblest service; to sell all that it has, and give to the poor; and come and follow the Son of man. So it adapts its call to each moment in our fate; and says little as yet of all that it has behind, lying there sealed and closed—all the peculiar secrets of the faith—the mystery of the cross, and of the redemption, and of absolution and of regeneration—secrets which it will reserve until the day when the brave and gallant life that started with such splendid promise of achievement, shall have reached the discovery that, indeed, it has nought at all to bring to the Master but “the troubled spirit,” “the broken and the contrite heart.”

No! it will not press you hard before your time; only it must ask of you—now, while you are young—(1) to be prepared to find much of it more or less unintelligible, until you have traversed the experiences to which it responds, until you have fainted under the needs which it relieves; it asks you to remember the plain truth that you cannot, while still the Bridegroom is with you, know the full blessing that comes to them that fast and mourn.

(2) And, again, it asks you, on the strength of such proof as you have already made of its veracity, to trust it further in its warnings of the peril which it declares to be inevitably ahead of you. In giving this warning, it has, as I have said, the backing of man's universal experience, which witnesses, by every voice it possesses, to the disappointments and distresses that await every single soul in its passage through this troubled world. And you may well trust it, therefore, if already, before you are well aware of the strain that will follow, it bids you nerve yourselves, by some preparatory discipline, for an encounter that is bound to come. "What I do unto you, my son, thou canst not know now; but thou shalt know hereafter." That is its quiet pleading, as it urges on you some Lenten exercise in self-control, in self-restraint, in self-denial. Not now, indeed! Thou canst not understand its meaning now. No! But hereafter. Ah! hereafter! Hereafter there will come an hour of fierce strain and of desperate warfare! How terrible if then you find yourself with will unbraced, with courage untrained, without having ever learned to bend under a moral demand, to surrender a personal desire, to tread under your ghostly foe, to hold yourself unspotted by pollution! Hereafter you will know what it would have been if, in your earlier days, as Lent came round, you had at least fitted on your armour, and had found out where it rubbed, and had got your weapons in hand, and had girt yourself about with the girdle of obedience. Oh, trust the teaching, and be wise in time!

But the protest against Lent, as an unmeaning

anxiety, is not confined to the boyish confidence of our youth. The full manhood that comes to us can so easily arrive without disclosing the deeper secret that it is intended to reveal. And it does so, above all, in places such as a University, where the development is so encompassed with favourable environment, that it comes about imperceptibly, without effort or struggle. Here the very goodness of the conditions smothers up the secret intention which governs the growth. That intention lurks behind, underground; nothing unearths it; nothing forces it out into the light. Thus life may grow more and more perfect, while the purpose of life becomes more and more hopelessly concealed. Yet only according to the measure with which that purpose is brought into the foreground can the austere claim of religion ever be recognized.

For life has a purpose; it does not end in itself, in its own growth, in its own perfection. This is the assertion which is the root of all religion. Life is good as looking out towards a culmination in God. This is its interpretation; and, in man, this purpose, common to all life, becomes conscious of itself; it recognizes its own interpretation; the intention becomes in him voluntary and free; he can identify himself with his own end. And this identification is religion. In religion, man, under the call of God from above, under the pressure of the instructing Spirit of God, offers himself, surrenders himself to the intention which is already in him. He gives, with joyful freedom, himself and all that is in him to God, Who made him both what he is now and what he will become

hereafter. Herein, in this vital and voluntary surrender, and herein alone, does he discover and exercise his true manhood. By virtue of this alone does he step out on to his proper plane above the level at which animal life is arrested, and disclose his moral character.

For animal life, however exquisite and excellent, is animal still so long as it is given to God it knows not how. The powers that are in it devote themselves to their inherent task by the very condition of their existence. Under the compulsion of an external pressure, under the movement of an inward impulse, the unconscious life goes forward in the most available directions; it makes the best of its opportunities; it brings and adds to the sum of facts all that its native capacities permit it to add and bring. It is given, and taken, and used, in obedience to some secret guidance, which, for lack of understanding it, we name instinct.

But man reviews himself, and according to the degree to which he can accomplish the review, he adds something of his own to the sum of forces by which he is directed; his own capacity to review what he has been, to weigh what he is, to review and to foresee his fate, is an element which enters into the determination of what he will be. According to the measure of this element he is what we call free and therefore moral; and according to the degree with which he can transfigure that rational review and that moral determination into a glad personal recognition of himself as in God, and for God, he is spiritual, he is religious.

Here, then, is the sole dividing line between himself and the animal. His capacity, his skill, these are all supplied him under the same conditions as those which govern the lower grade of life. Heredity and environment handle and endow him, enrich or specialize him; he is the creature of birth, of circumstances, of accident, of nature. So far, for all his superiority of gift, he might yet be only a higher mammal with a subtler arrangement of brain, with a finer organization of nerve.

But the sundering line runs sharp and clear at the point, wherever it comes, where the body of instincts drop from under him, and he is left standing, in suspense, in pause, beholding himself; estimating his own power. What will be the issue of the estimate? For that is the sole matter at stake; the matter estimated is, so to speak, indifferent. It may be that he is reviewing a mass of splendid forces that lie ordered and disciplined in a vigorous and healthy frame. Or it may be that what he sees is a poor, thin, slight, frail, hesitating current of vitality that trickles wearily through a sickly body. The difference between the two is religiously and spiritually nought. All vital difference turns solely on what happens when the power of consideration closes in an act. What will he do with himself? Will he surrender all that he reviews to the God Who gave it? Will he make the act? Will he take it all up in his hands, and make the offering of himself? "O my God, my Father, Maker and Lover of my soul! Behold! all that I am, all that I am able to be, it is Thine. Of Thine own

do we give Thee; use me, possess me, direct me, not for mine own pleasure, but for Thine own honour."

That is the spiritual surrender in us, while it is the one office of our days on earth to evoke and to enlarge. And now it is easy to anticipate the peril of which I spoke—the peril that the very excellence of the gifts should conceal and stifle their secret purpose. For they may satisfy us by their very dignity; they may lull us by their obvious superiority. The very sight of the lovely array of gracious and beneficent powers with which we are endowed is pleasant and engaging. And still more delightful is it to detect, as education develops their facilities, all that they have a possibility of attaining. How thrilling the outbreak of the imagination, when it first puts out its power under the stimulus of intellectual companionship, and lightens from one end of heaven to the other! And the fancy and the wit—how exhilarating their spontaneous exercise! How they kindle; how they glow! And our early successes, when first we find ourselves recognized, sought after, appreciated, popular, gifted! It seems as if this, indeed, were life itself—just to taste and practise our gifts. Life, we say, consists in feeling ourselves alive. Just to live freely, just to grow, just to bring out all that is in us, just to develop, and expand, and improve, and increase; this by itself will occupy all our time, our pains, our interest, our energy. Surely this is enough.

This is the peril of our early manhood; and the deception may only too easily intensify as the years

slide smoothly on. And the peril will be at its height in those whose habit and temper tend naturally towards virtue. These have good and pure endowments of character imbued or ingrained. Circumstance favours and evokes and feeds all that is best. Within and without, everything combines to force them forward into the paths of righteousness. They have good-nature, and this is as salt to keep them kindly, pleasant, helpful; they have high and varied interests, and these forces dominate their desires, and save them from lower and grosser aims; they have self-control, and ordered emotions, and a strong will, and a refined delicacy of taste; and they despise the loud discords of passion, and they recoil in disgust from coarse temptations. They have an honourable position, and they take kindly to it; they find a natural satisfaction in exercising its ministries, in fulfilling its responsibilities; they take a fastidious pride in doing all that it is incumbent on them to do, with the highest possible finish; they are, perhaps, dedicated to some post of trust and influence, and they are ever more and more busied with its benignant activities; and they discover increasing aptitudes for valuable work; and a grateful world makes use of them to the full. Life, without any special effort of their own, takes for them a fair and gracious and dignified form; they pass up its inviting stages; they work hard, but they are glad to work; it is their joy to be in full swing. Their high reputation becomes itself a new protection, a new call; they shrink from the slightest act that would bring slur or suspicion upon their accredited name. A positive sin

would wound their self-respect ; it would be intolerable ; they could not endure the indignity of self-condemnation. Their own conscience pricks them with disagreeable reproach whenever they consciously fail to reach the high standard which it is their pride to keep ever before them.

So they live, and can anything be worthier ? And all of it is real and genuine ; and they feel it so : and so feeling, they cannot but justly despise the moral inconsistencies and hypocrisies of many who profess religion more vehemently than they do themselves. "A faith is known by its fruits ;" and here are the fruits : they stand the Lord's test so far better than those poor limp creatures who are so full of spiritual aspirations, and yet slip into such doubtful and scandalous practice. It is not that they themselves are necessarily irreligious. Nay, the self-deception will be at its very height in the cases where inclination or circumstances have conspired to carry them churchwards. These like religion ; they are happy in presenting themselves before God ; not the least in hypocritical regard to external custom, but because the order and decency and honourable dignity of worship form a natural and instinctive environment to lives so harmoniously framed. They find a happy response in the recognition of a Father and a Judge. The voices of holiness, the promises of peace mingle, easily and sweetly, with their own clean desires : and long habit has now confirmed all this ; and has added to it a completeness that perfects itself, endowing it with the friendliness of familiarity, clothing it with

the grace of ancient tenderness, with immemorial associations.

So it grows, in the rhythmic regularity of seasonable years; and what has Lent to do with such a graceful growth as this? Why this interruption to its even movements? Why this anxious self-questioning? Why this peevish and uncomfortable suspicion? True, there may be corrections and modifications which advancing experience may suggest; no man can afford to neglect himself; no man is above the possibility of improvement; a wise conscience will always be on the watch against an infirmity; it will never assume impeccability. That is acknowledged. But that is not the tone of Lent; that is not the spirit of the Passion for which Lent prepares. Something much more relentless and apprehensive and fierce is in these Lenten threats than anything which self-culture can tolerate or even understand. Yet why? they ask. Could life be better? Could it manifest itself in a more excellent way?

Life! we retort. What life? Human life? Why, it is not yet begun! All this that we have pictured is but the life of man as the crown of the animal world—the life of an animal beautifully endowed, carried to its highest perfection, become moral and religious, as it were, by the development of instinct. But the one ultimate step by which the manhood in them is to emerge from under all this over-structure, by which it is to come out into the light of day, is to disclose and discover itself—that one ultimate step still remains to be taken.

What is the step by which the manhood stands clear of all encumbrance? The gift of himself to God. The dedication of himself to God. It is for this that all this excellent preparation has been made. Nothing, we grant, could exceed the fairness and the perfection of the materials so collected for the offering. Nothing could better the endowments that now lie ready for the great act. Ah! the honour, the delight, the splendour of having so much to bring. All this beautiful life, with its delicate decencies, its busy aptitudes, its disciplined capacities, is a precious gift, indeed, for any of us to be permitted to hold in our hands—a gift most dear to Him from Whom alone all good gifts come.

And He, the great God, is looking for it; He counts much upon it. All this is gold of His committed in trust. There would be joy, indeed, in heaven if such a man's heart, thus splendidly endowed, were to kindle within him, and he were to raise his eyes to the great white throne and the companies of heaven and the golden altar, and to lift up the whole possession in the hands of the Spirit, and lay it at the feet of the Lamb, even with those blessed ones who for ever cast down their golden crowns upon the sea of glass. Ah! that would be, indeed, to make manifest the image of God in him; the image of Him Who surrendered for us all that He held dearest, even His own Son. Then there would be, indeed, the happy interchange that should knit Father to child, and child to Father; the interchange of gifts which makes life one continuous act of love. "Son, thou art ever with Me; all that

I have is thine." "Yes! my Father, Thou hast given me all, and therefore all that I have is Thine." Over such an act as this there would be a joy among the angels, far, far above all that breaks out over the returning prodigal.

But, alas! how is it that God obtains from the prodigals that lower joy; while so rare, so pitifully rare, is it that He can win the higher joy from the good son in the house?

Somehow, those prodigals whose career has been so tiresome, so base, do nevertheless get hold of the one secret better and quicker than the ninety-nine good, honest, moral, useful men, who are infinitely more companionable, more agreeable, more consistent, more pleasant, more manly, more noble, but who yet never have made the deed of surrender, never have arrived at the supreme act, never have looked up into the face of the Father Which is in heaven, with a cry sent up from their innermost souls, saying, "Lord, I am here to do Thy will;" "I live, O Lord! yet now not I, but Thou livest in me."

That is the one thing needful. It will take no denial; it will admit of no excuse. By it alone we enter the kingdom, which is the kingdom of self-sacrifice. Have we done it, you and I? It is a searching question, anxious, irresistible. It breaks up so much that is comfortable. It pushes aside so much of our habitual good complacency. "Yes!" it keeps saying, "you have, no doubt, an excellent heritage of youth, health, good spirits. They are good; but are they given to God? Your talent it is very effective;

but is it given? Your honesty, your sincerity, they are most praiseworthy; but are they given? Your good name, your popularity, your cleverness, your steadiness, your industry, your good humour, your usefulness, your refinement, your delight in all that is gracious and fair, your literary skill, your delicate taste, your earnest work, your religious temper, your spiritual sensibility—all these are excellent material for the offering; but are they dedicated? are they surrendered? Has the flame of sacrifice ever kindled upon them? For if not, then your very goodness is soothing to fatal slumber your true and divine manhood, and you will waken up at last only to understand why it is that the very publicans and harlots are trooping into heaven before you.

Dear brethren, it is a searching question, and one upon which our Lord lays again and again alarming emphasis. Surely you and I are the last who ought to protest against the anxiety of Lent. We are those who need most urgently the serious recall, the piercing examination. The fairer and cleaner our lives, and the smoother our days, the more strident should be the note of warning that shakes us from out our self-approval, and forces us to ask whether, for all our gifts, we ourselves are yet ungiven. We are surely but too apt to be among that easy multitude who followed without much anxiety behind the feet of the Lord, upon whom He thought it well to turn with the sharp reminder, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."

SERMON XIV.

THE WISE MAN AND THE FOOL.

“Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight : for by the Law is the knowledge of sin. . . . Do we then make void the Law through faith ? God forbid : yea, we establish the Law.”—ROM. iii. 20, 31.

ST. PAUL stands at the close of the Law. He is reading out to us its ultimate issues. There, at the end of that long history, fifteen hundred years since the voice spoke on Sinai, under the pressure of the crowding years the logical results of the system have been completely disclosed. It was a sad and barren conclusion. The Law (it was now only too clear)—the Law, “just, and good, and holy” as it was, given by the dispensation of angels, the pride and privilege of a people to whom had been committed the oracles of God—this Law of Moses had achieved nothing of what it seemed to promise ; it had not carried its holders into that safe and blessed rest to which Joshua pointed ; it had left them, after all, outside the land of peace, to die in the wilderness. Its hope had been overshadowed from the first by the fate of him who looked out from Pisgah upon a land that he should never enter. We are all familiar enough with St.

Paul's vigorous dialectic. We know how he lays fast hold of his conclusion, and sweeps aside all the intervening stages by which that end has been reached. It is the end which determines the significance of all, and the end of the Law was absolutely clear and decisive; all that delayed or concealed the ultimate conclusion could be left out of count. In the end, whatever the qualification which might be pleaded—in the end the Law had done nothing but force the knowledge of sin. Nay! more than that, it had even provoked unto sin; for "sin, taking occasion of the Law, had deceived, and by it slain." Thus the Law, ordained as it was unto life, had been found in actual practice to be unto death. It had proved itself no free mother, but a very Hagar, a mother of slaves, bearing children only unto bondage, children of mockery, children of the dry and stony wilderness. "By the Law shall no flesh be justified." It had only served to prove that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Now, I suppose there is no one who has not at first sight felt this dialectic of the Apostle to be forced, extravagant, paradoxical. It seems so strangely inconsistent with the appeals made under the Law; with the invocations therein involved. It sounds to us so profoundly improbable, and so utterly at variance with the obvious and professed purpose with which the moral law stands ever against us, issuing its imperial summons. We recoil from the exaggerated dilemma and antithesis of an argument that is so far from speaking directly home to the natural reason and the native instincts.

And why should we not recoil? Is St. Paul not conscious that he is explaining a paradox? Is he not sensitive of the strain and struggle of the position which he is so bent on asserting? Surely, every syllable writhes, as it were, under the violence of the passion by which the conclusion is extorted from his experience. It is the very last and strangest conclusion that any one could have anticipated, and every epigrammatic antithesis rings with the tone of his own surprise, with the vehemence of his own recoil from the solution at which he is nevertheless compelled to arrive.

Nothing but the forcible experience of centuries could have worked out a position so hopelessly unanticipated. And we, who are sensible of the recoil, can only recover from our bewilderment by turning back to that lengthy and historical experience under the stimulus of which the relentless logic of facts slowly but surely travelled towards this extraordinary result. That experience is recorded for us in the Books of the Old Testament, and there we can see how complete is the recognition that this ultimate result of the Law was wholly foreign to its primary and open profession. The Law had offered itself, as we know, to the Jews under a very different face and with far other promise. Far from entering to condemn, to humiliate, to crush, to slay, it had arrived with everything that could endear it to the men whose breath it kindled and whose spirits it inspired. How strangely pathetic to turn back from St. Paul's despairing cry against this body of death in which he

found himself miserably snared, to the earlier greetings of welcome and joy with which loyal Jewish souls had saluted these very statutes and ordinances which now lay heavy on him as frost.

The Law had appealed to all that was most inspiring, most confident, most true, in the human heart. How could it not? For all recognition of law is the proof that the mind of man is of one mould and make with the mind of God the Creator. It is not we who have invented imaginary laws: for if so, events could not, conceivably, correspond to them with sure regularity; nor should we be able to use one law as a basis from which to discover another. Facts would for ever be upsetting our expectations. But if they do not so disappoint us, if every added year intensifies our certainty of their conformity to our discovered laws, then we are certain that we have hold of the real secret of their motions; and this must mean that our minds can think in something of the way that God's mind thinks; that facts are to us what they are to Him; that we can in our measure enter into His scheme of things; can go behind the mere facts and read their inner mental mechanism; can comprehend to that extent how God does His work.

The discovery of any natural law is, then, an act of admittance within the mind of God. That is what should give its elevation and dignity to scientific knowledge. Through it we should feel ourselves passing into the holy places, we should take our shoes from off our feet, for indeed it summons us nearer to the Most High. Each new science opens as it were a door

for us into heaven; and through it we hear a voice that calls to us, "Come up hither; I will show you things that are, and are to come."

The knowledge of law, then, is always, in all its forms, a summons to all that is strongest and best in us—our human energy, our courage, our worth, our capacity. By it we hold the key; we win dominion; we make and unmake; we lay our hands upon the wheel of life. Here, indeed, is honour, is delight, is glory for man. And if this is so in the lower rank of physical law, how much more as we mount stage by stage to the high regions of the moral law! Here still nearer than ever we press in within the hidden secrets of God. Here we not only are summoned to see how He works, but also why He works, His own inner motives, His inspiring devices, His ultimate goal. Here we touch not His works only, but Him Himself. We breathe His breath, we gaze on His image, we taste His satisfaction. We are conscious of the meaning of His love; we are called into the mystery of companionship, of friendship with God. Should not this send a thrill of joy through the very nerves and fibres of the spirit as it beholds this high door opened unto heaven, and the voice cries yet again more securely, more emphatically than ever, "Come up hither: I will show you My Name"? Here, in the cleft of this rock, lifted high above the dim plain, we may hear with head bowed, with soul hushed, the Name of the Lord pass by—"The Lord, merciful and gracious, having compassion for thousands, Who will by no means clear the guilty."

Such joy there should be to greet the knowledge of the Law. And such joy there indeed was—deep, inspiring, inexhaustible joy in welcoming the magnificent appeal. We know it was so; we hear its unending echoes repeated in line after line of the hundred and nineteenth psalm.

The Law seemed then no burden, no misery, no spear of conviction, no sword to slay. It was not sin that woke at its voice and the man that died. Nay! far from it. Sin was for the moment stifled and drowned under the weight of the exceeding glory. Sin died down into momentary silence, and the man woke, and lived,—the man, the inner man, on fire with the heat of the new knowledge, rejoicing in the Law, burning to respond to its ennobling call, leaping forward to salute, as it were, the face of a friend long desired. Called to friendship with God, to walk with God, who could withhold his thanks? Who could be slow to taste the sweetness of walking in the house of God as a friend? “Oh how amiable are Thy dwellings, thou Lord God of hosts! Blessed is the man in whose heart are Thy ways. One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. For the Lord gives grace and worship. No good thing will He withhold from him that leadeth a godly life.”

How hopeful, how delighted, is man's spirit as it clasps that revealed Law, and clings to it, and caresses it, and feeds on it, and broods over it, and pours out its grateful praises for the dear, undreamed-of boon! “The law of Thy mouth is dearer unto me than thousands of gold and silver. How sweet are Thy words

unto my mouth: yea, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb!" How it foresees days and years of joy ahead, which shall all be employed in the delicious task of learning, and studying, and teaching, and absorbing the entire Law! "Oh, teach me Thy statutes. Give me understanding, that I may learn Thy statutes. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy Law. Yea, I will observe it with my whole heart."

In trouble, in distress, all will be well if only this privilege be left him. "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. I have remembered Thy Name, O Lord, in the night season, and have kept Thy Word." Yes, pain and distress themselves will be justified if only they lead nearer to this high knowledge. "It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I might learn Thy statutes. Before I was troubled I went wrong; but now I have kept Thy testimonies."

And still, ever and ever, with the delight of repetition, goes up the recurring petition; "Hear me, O Lord; I will keep thy statutes! seek Thy servant, for I do not forget Thy commandments. Oh, teach me Thy statutes, and I shall observe them even unto the end."

To know the Law! To know the Right! Surely in such knowledge lies the power to do righteousness. Knowledge is the source of power over the physical world. Knowledge is, surely, the secret of all goodness in the moral world.

So Socrates had said, in the buoyancy of his earliest recognition that man is a law unto himself. Incredible,

it seemed to him—incredible that a rational man should actually know the good and not do it.

And the Jew, too (though with a far deeper sense of the co-operation that must meet him from the side of God, and of the prayerfulness that, therefore, must accompany the efforts), still did recognize, with all his heart and soul, the wonder and the light, the force and the splendour, of this spiritual knowledge. And out of his sense of this wonder he built up an ethical ideal—the ideal of the wise man. The wise man! the man whose soul lies open to the wisdom of God, that wisdom which is more precious than riches, the high Lady, “in whose right hand is length of days, and in her left riches and honour: whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace.” In her is “a spirit holy, subtle, clear, undefiled, loving the thing which is good, kind to man, steadfast, free from care, who passeth through all these by reason of her presence: she is the breath of the power of God, the brightness of the everlasting life, the unspotted mirror of His power, the image of His goodness.” So high she is, so pure, and yet she opens herself out to men. “In all ages, entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God.” “God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom.”

The good man is the wise man. And by the wise man is meant one who responds, with intelligent appreciation, to the opportunities laid open to him: he is one who knows the value of what is offered him, and spares no pains to attain it; he deems all effort and industry worth while, if they ensure him possession of

the one thing needful. He answers, from his side, to the advances made on the side of God ; he is trained, alert, on the watch ; he makes himself ready beforehand for the Wisdom who is travelling towards him ; he seeks for her as a queen and mistress above all things. She crieth at the gates and in the streets, and he hears her ; she spreadeth her merchandise, and he is eager to buy ; she layeth out her feast, and mingleth her wine ; she sendeth out her maidens ; she crieth upon the highest places of the city : " Who is simple, let him turn in hither ; come, eat of my bread, and drink of my wine which I have mingled ; " and the wise know her voice, and sit at her table, and eat and drink in gladness of heart.

Patiently they follow her, they listen, they learn ; no life is long enough to exhaust her instructions ; they cling to her, they throw into the blessed task the industry of the student, the keenness of the merchant, the fascination of the explorer, the devotion of the lover. They bind her law upon their foreheads ; they write it upon the table of their hearts ; they say to wisdom, " Thou art my sister ; " they store up her treasures in books of proverbs—the records won out of all times and seasons of her counsels, her statutes, her ordinances. These are transmitted from father to son ; they build up an inherited science of moral direction ; for wisdom they know is the principal thing, therefore they must get wisdom, and with all their getting they must get understanding. And ever the voice calls to them, " Take fast hold of instruction ; let not her go : keep her ; she is thy life."

The good man is the wise man; he has all the characteristics of them that know; his moral tone is of the same calibre and temper as belongs to a man of trained and wide intelligence; he is as one who moves about in a world that he understands; he observes all, from the cedar of Libanus to the hyssop on the wall; he notes how all is sweetly ordered in wisdom, from end to end; and he, too, enters into that sweet and lovely order; he, too, walks in free obedience to law; he is perfectly in place, adapted to all emergencies, true to every direction, skilled in meeting all accidents. He moves through life as if of it; he and it are friends; he is in possession of its secret; nothing can upset, disturb, confuse, destroy him. He amasses all steadfast experience, he gathers instruction from every side; in his steps he is not straitened, in his running he does not stumble. And all this is no mere intellectual shrewdness. It is the issue of a religious surrender to the sway of an authoritative wisdom whom he loves, and understands though loving, and images in himself by love; being as she is, "sweet, tender, kindly, gracious, noble, calm, secure," powerful, moving in the force of that purity of love into which no defiled thing can enter, by which "she is the unspotted mirror of the goodness of God."

Such is the wise man as the Jew pictured him; and over against him he drew that memorable counter-picture, the character of the fool. As virtue is taken under the head of knowledge, so vice is seen to be folly. The sinner is the fool—the man who understands nothing about himself, or his place, or his office, or his

end ; who has never opened his eyes upon the wonderful scene through which he is passing, never has caught a glimpse of its uncovered secret. In vain for him Wisdom spreads her feast ; in vain she stands at the entry of the city crying aloud, "Unto you, O men, I call ; and my voice is to the sons of men." But no ! the fool sees nothing, hears nothing. It is too much trouble ; he is sluggish, gross, lazy. "Yet a little sleep he must have ; a little slumber, and a little folding of the hands to sleep." The fool is the man who is too silly to take things seriously, too feeble to be in earnest. There is no stuff in him, no substance, nothing to rely upon. It is all dissipated in idleness, in frivolity ; it slips through your hands. The fool is a rope of sand, there is no getting hold of him.

And then he is so dull, so unresponsive, so blank. No intelligence lightens through him. He remains dull-eyed, cold, stupid, when all round him things move swiftly. You cannot wake him up to perceive or understand. He is at his worst when things about him are at their best. The deeper or higher the subject, the less it appeals to him. He is out of all touch with the realities of life ; you do not know what to do with him, he oppresses you as a weight. "What is heavier than lead, and what is his name but a fool ?"

And into this empty, feckless brain enter all bad imaginations. He knows nothing of any right way in which to walk, and therefore he is sure to stumble into the wrong. Any deceit takes him in ; all things that misguide have him as their easy prey. If the good life be indeed the careful and laborious business which

we have seen it to be, a matter demanding the most urgent and serious study, then the fool is bound to make a mess of it—is bound to come to grief. He must get tangled in its intricate machinery; and if he does, then there is a stern issue. Life is in earnest, it has a work set before it; these encumbrances, these shiftless obstructions, it cannot away with. It must push them aside, expel them, crush them. He that despiseth his life shall die. "Judgments are prepared for scorers, and stripes for the back of fools."

Above all, the fool who is deaf to the voice of the Lady Wisdom as she spreadeth her feast, and furnisheth her tables, hears, alas! too plainly another inviting voice—the voice of "the strange woman which flattereth with her words; she who is without in the streets, whose mouth is smoother than oil, but whose end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword." After her he goeth, stupid and blind, "even as an ox goeth to the slaughter;" light and frivolous, as a "bird that hasteth to the snare," and "knoweth not that her house is the way to hell, going down to the chamber of death."

The wise man and the fool!

These are twin portraits, that have an abiding value. At all times of advanced culture, they resume their place, as typical expression of the contrast between good and evil, in the form in which that contrast most effectively strikes our cultivated imagination. They reach us, as we know well, through other channels than the Jewish Law. They are graven upon the

memories of all educated men by the exquisite handicraft of Hellenic philosophy; and again and again, in days like our own, when the perfection of literary art once more puts out upon us the peculiar force of its fascination, these two types tend to embody for many of us the ultimate word of ethics. Our final arguments in answer to the question, What claim has virtue upon my conscience? would only be given in the retort, "Look on this picture and on that!" Look at the wise man and the fool, and can you hesitate in which direction your choice lies? Goodness is wisdom; it corresponds, in the department of conduct, to that which, in every other department of life, marks the action of the intelligent and skilful man. Any one who, in these other regions, plays the part of the man of intelligence and work, will and must, when he arrives on this ethical ground, if he be consistent with himself, be and do good. Any one who, in matters of conduct and intention, does wrong, is exhibiting that manner and temper and character which, in every other department of life, we should recognize and stamp at once, without a moment's hesitation, as the work of the ignorant fool.

That is the familiar canon, the standard; we feel its reassertion going on all about us to-day; there are whole sections of educated society where it is practically dominant. And its profound value is not to be denied. Nay! it stands there before us, in the proverbial books of the New Testament, sanctioned and upheld by Divine authority. It is not, indeed, the last word; it is but a stage in the ethical educa-

tion through which our sacred books carry us; but it is drawn out into peculiar prominence; it is a marked moment; and, moreover, it has much still to say to us. It is never to be dropped; it contains one of the richest and deepest deposits which we Christians inherit from the earlier dispensation.

Only, in our use of this deposit, we have ever to remember that a moral convulsion has intervened between us and it; the convulsion that interprets itself to us through the vehement language by which St. Paul drags us out of our genial confidence under "the Law," and forces us into the humiliation that waits on Grace. That earlier ideal belongs to the ethical system which he sums up in the name which, to him, symbolizes everything that belongs to a righteousness won by man himself, by his own moral behaviour, by his own loftiness of will, by his own eager response to the inviting voice of God, in the name of "the Law." It was an ideal perfect, right and complete in itself, "just and true and holy." But its attainment had, long ago, been undermined from within; there was a flaw far down, a crack which must disclose itself, in the secret will of man, to which the ideal appealed with so much open and energetic hopefulness. And the higher the ideal, the severer becomes the strain on the resources which alone could accomplish it; and as that strain sharpens, the flaw must start, the crack must widen and spread; the failure is bound to become more and more evident, palpable, inevitable, miserable. There is no hope of final achievement by that road. If this formula covers all the conditions, the effort is made

under a doom of fatal defeat. There can be but one issue, the conviction of impotence.

It is not my purpose to enter into the argument of St. Paul, by which he so passionately justifies his position that we cannot content ourselves with this moral ideal as our final point of arrest, without being utterly false to the cross of Christ and to the significance of grace. But we may, at least, to-day remind ourselves of the intense reality of the dialectic, which is so apt to sound to us as forced and unmeaning, by recalling that, through that vehement argument, he has effected the transition which changed the ethical ideal from that of the wise man and the fool to that of the saint and the sinner!

The saint and the sinner! What a different world of associations do the two words call up! What a transformation of atmosphere! We have passed out of one climate into another: it is a changed land, with new lights and colour, and fruits and flowers.

Yea; and that change, so vividly felt, is the measure of the reality which St. Paul so doggedly enforced. Not for nothing did he spend himself in emphasizing the radical and vital difference between law and grace if, under one system, the moral arguments culminated in the antithesis between the wise man and the fool; and, under the other, in the antithesis between the saint and the sinner.

Yet, decisive as was the change, the content of the older ideal is all taken up, and re-found in the new. It is not lost, for Christ does not destroy but fulfils

even that which He displaces. It is true that the texture of the saint is shot through with strands of penitence and of passion which were impossible to the wise man. His goodness has its springs in sources that run down into depths of inner being which were left untouched and undiscovered by the earlier wisdom. It is the root and origin of His character which is especially affected; it is there in its innermost recess, where the flaw lay which wrecked his earlier hope; and it is there, where the grace arrives to rescue and to renew his broken hope. And, no doubt, the mere fact that the character springs from a changed source tells upon the development of the character throughout, and endows it with those special hues and tones and fragrance which make the saint differ at every point from the type given us in the portrait of the good wise man. Yet the main features of the old character are all included in the new; the righteousness which marks the man under grace contains within it the righteousness sought under the law.

And, therefore, my brethren, goodness is still wisdom. Christ has not altered that, however much He has transformed the mode of attaining it.

The good man, under grace, has still all the characteristics that were defined in time of old. He has the stamp upon him, so far as he is good, of everything that is intelligent, human, manly, rational, strong, and capable. Do we not recognize this plainly enough, as St. Paul, the very Apostle who drove us to alter our standpoint, and formulated for us the new motive, impresses upon us, in Epistle after Epistle, the features,

as he conceives them, of the new man, remade in Christ Jesus?

How sane, and robust, and sound, and complete is the character upon which he insists! The broken and contrite heart, that has become dead to itself and that has cast itself into the paradoxical and passionate experiences that lie summed up in the phrase, "I live, yet not I; Christ liveth in me!" comes out of that struggle, out of that agony of penitence, in no guise of fanatical extravagance. No! it manifests itself in disciplined and careful self-control, sober, watchful, kindly, peaceable, gentle, and restrained. How St. Paul insists on the practical virtues of the gentleman! He is ever requiring courtesy, steadiness, forethought. He dwells on the moral excellence of all that is sure-footed, balanced, proportioned. He abhors all disorder, rashness, haste, self-assertion; all that is violent, puffed up, and vaporous. He demands quietness and loving-kindness and goodness and patience. He requires of a man that he should go about his business with the earnest sobriety of a man who has a work in hand, for which he must buy up all serviceable occasions. He must be one who never forgets to give others their due; who waits on the weak; who treats all with equal honour; who respects the diversity of gifts; who gives much and takes little. He must be one who never behaves himself unseemly; seeks not his own; is not easily provoked; thinks no evil; endures all things, hopes all things; does all for the edification of the body.

How wise and wholesome it all is! Wholesome!

The very word which seems to fill St. Paul's later imagination, as he speaks his farewell charges to the Church which he must so soon leave alone. He prays them, with urgent repetitions, to preserve the wholesomeness of doctrine, of life, of habit, the moral soundness of the healthy will. Is not this the wise man still?

And the portrait of the fool! Does not that, too, preserve its significance?

We have, indeed, a new message to the sinner, which exhibits the love of a Father Whose patience and pardon not even the folly of the fool can disgust or exhaust.

Yes. But be sure of it—sin is still folly; the sinner is, as much as ever, the great fool. That which the Jew saw we see still, though now we are taught by Christ to break through the contempt and the anger which such folly naturally provokes; and we are given the power, from Him, to love the human soul against whom we feel so irritated, but for whom God sent His Son to die.

Ah, yes! not only that; our irritation drops from us, for we are too near him ourselves. The folly of the sinning fool! It is in us. We know it well. If we have at all broken away from the folly, it is only because we have been caught up out of the foolishness to which we madly clung, and have received some touch of that wisdom which is not our own righteousness, but that which comes from above.

This must force out of us all that relentless contempt with which the older generation read the condemna-

tion of "the fool." But the picture is as true as ever. Rather, since Christ came and threw His light on the scene, the folly of sin is more obvious, more downright than ever. This is its pathos, that it is so foolish. If ever we go outside our own temptations and look on at others sinning, there is nothing more obvious to us than this—its utter folly. How pitiful the miscalculation, the misdirection, the perversion, the distortion, the disproportion, the waste! What a dismal tale of folly it is which repeats itself over and over again in the confidences that reach the ear of the lawyer, the doctor, the confessor! There is such wearisome folly in the monotony with which men travel down the highways of sin, by which they have seen others go down to destruction before their very eyes. Is it drink? is it gambling? Well, we know every step of the road. We can foretell with dreadful accuracy all that will happen! The same stupid story will repeat itself. A man with hope, with bright home, with capacity, with success before him, with everything to make life a joy, throws all to the winds; hope, home, happiness, skill, are all shattered, wrecked, in the very way that was foreseen. That is the folly of it!

Or the folly of licentiousness. Every one knows it from beginning to end: all the warnings are in view, and yet down the old evil road they still turn! Is any sin encompassed and hedged with such dismal warning? The swarms of men who carry their judgment in their faces—is there not warning enough in them? There they are, every one can see them—can see gross, sinister, sensual looks, so repellent, so cruel, so noisome.

Or those others—are they no warning? Depressed, unhealthy, beclouded, woe-begone, sick of some nameless shame. Look at them! Through them, day and night goes up the living protest of Nature, her cry of alarm and judgment. And yet, down into the thick of it all, we watch him stepping still, the young man void of understanding—gay, thoughtless, vacant—making his silly mock at sin. He will not see, he will not hear, though heaven and earth are loud with warning. Down he goes, easy, light-hearted. We from outside note, perhaps, how his bright boyishness is dying out of him. How is it? The charm is somehow gone—the fearless eye, the unclouded look; something has happened to him! We feel it—it is his innocence that has fled. He is on the fatal slope. Soon he will be even as those others. He is running into the trap, though it be set in his very sight. “As a bird, he hasteneth into the snare! As an ox, he goeth down to the slaughter!”

Oh! the pity of it, the pity of it, when “he knoweth that the dead are there, and that he goeth down to the chambers of death!”

In all its forms, sin means a misconception of the proportion of things. It is this which condemns so severely the easy-going worldliness, which keeps clear of those grosser falls, and yet never fastens on life’s secret. It is the sin of misconception, of misdirection. Round and above us the great work of God moves, presses forward and strains to its fulfilment. Eternal issues are at stake; voices call us to the work; angels reach out helping hands; the Spirit urges, beseeches, invites;

the mighty temple of God rises layer upon layer, and we may be a stone within its walls! All things are ours, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come. We know it; we profess to believe it. And what are we about? What fleeting interests occupy our attention? On what contemptible littleness is our desire set? What folly it all is! How angry we are with ourselves! For a moment we push aside all that we see to be so frivolous, empty, earthly; the idle, selfish, wilful preoccupations of our main life! And then the effort dies away, and back they all swarm about us again, and once more we forego all the Vision on the Mount, and we forget that we are but passengers here towards a heavenly country. Again, we are absorbed in the petty, narrow interests that come and go with the fashion of the hour. We set ourselves to no task, we accomplish nothing; we go through the round of social conventions, which we know will leave us exactly where they found us. We are no better; no nearer to Christ's example; no more ready to die than we were. Lost and busy in the thick of occupations that can have no issue, no fruit hereafter, we are as blind as ever to the glory of our eternal destiny in Christ Jesus. And against us—our small vanities, our hollow industry—we know as justly, as inevitably, as against him who of old saw nothing to do here but to build barns and lay up treasures for his soul, it is God Himself Who utters the sentence: "Thou fool! how can it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

To rescue the soul from this loss; to release it;

to recover it; to pluck it out of the snare; to open a passage by which it may escape into air and light and freedom; to save ourselves from making a fatal miscalculation!—that is our Lenten work. That is worth a little pains, a little discipline.

And it can be done. That is the blessed news! It can be done, whatever our folly has been; because Wisdom, the Wisdom of God, has drawn near to us, with a far sweeter voice, with a yet more enthralling invocation, than ever she came nigh to the Jew of old. Nay! she not only draws near, bidding us come, one and all, to find our peace; but she has entered in, within us, and has endowed us with her own vitality and force, and puts out from within our souls her own unflawed will, and pleads from within us, before God, her own unspotted beauty.

Therefore it is that we can make our escape; “the snare is broken, and we are delivered.” We can, if only we suffer that Word of truth to work its way within and without; if only we will surrender ourselves to His handling, Who is the Wisdom and the Power of God.

SERMON XVII.

WAR.

“They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”—ISA. ii. 4.

PLATO, in the second book of the “Republic,” in the picture in which he swiftly dramatizes the upspringing of human society out of the immediate and natural needs that link men to one another in a confederacy of mutual help, traces in a few vivid touches the probable origin of war. His rudimentary State has quickly overstepped the strict limits set it by natural wants. It has brought reason and imagination into play, to enlarge its possibilities, to increase and multiply its desires. Luxury has begun—luxury, which takes its start in the simplest devices for giving a spice to food, and culminates in the higher forms of spice which are added to life by the efforts of rhapsodists, and dancers, and players, and poets. The desires which of old limited themselves to the resources which the home country supplied, now travel far afield. The house is too small; we want a slice of our neighbours’ land; and they, too, if they exceed the limit of necessity, will want a slice of ours. “That will be unavoidable,

Socrates," so his companion Glaucon agrees. "And then we shall go to war, Glaucon; that will be the next thing." "So we shall," he replied. "War, then," says Socrates, "we have certainly discovered to be derived from a source which is the cause of almost all the evils in states, private as well as public."

So Plato affirms; but then comes a startling surprise. Though the origin of war lies, according to him, in the greed bred by luxury, yet the army which war necessitates becomes for him the very centre and heart of his state; to its training he devotes all his powers; and out of it he proposes to educate and select the highest ideal of human character, the statesman-philosopher, who is at once the master and king of society, and also, in his culminating perfection, the priest of truth, the friend of God.

How is this? It is because Plato is fully possessed by the belief that evil can only be cured from within itself. Evil is a corruption of good, and its healing must lie always in laying fast hold of the good to which the evil corruptly witnesses, and in so enforcing and strengthening this latent good that it shall itself, of its own free and native vigour, eliminate and eradicate its sinister elements, and, by discovering its true exercise, purge off its own excesses.

In war, therefore, he looks to find the secret of war's cure. Perhaps some of us may know with what exquisite skill he works out this theme—how he detects, in luxury and in greed, the working of a reason which, in carrying man beyond the mere limits of nature's wants, in enabling him to conceive new

possibilities of appetite and enjoyment, places him above the animal whose wants are regulated by natural necessity. He has, indeed, fallen over into corrupt excess by overstepping the simple barriers within which natural need confines him; but the cure must come, not in shrinking back within the natural primitive needs, but in the higher recognition that if he can invent and manufacture wants, then he can also direct and govern desires. In place of nature's unreasoning limitations, he is endowed with the gift of self-control.

And now what Plato notices, with keenest interest, is that this very war, which originates in the corrupt excess, nevertheless, by inventing an army as a means of gratifying its corruption, has invented the very instrument, has brought about the very condition, by which and in which self-control, self-discipline, self-subordination, are best to be gained. The sheer necessities of a trained standing army involve the exercise of those higher moral qualities which belong to man's mastery over his passions and appetites. The soldier who is brought into existence by luxury cannot be himself luxurious, or he would be a bad soldier. He cannot be influenced by lower desires, or he would never stand a campaign. He cannot overstep all limits and barriers; on the contrary, he is bound to be the very ideal of order and obedience. He cannot be selfishly seeking his own personal gratification, for he is to hold himself at the service of his country; to be conformed in every habit, night and day, to her need of him; to be the patient and

enduring and self-sacrificing servant of her honour and her safety. Now, here, he argues, is the very root and cure of moral self-control. We have only got to separate this profession off from the bad ends which it arose to pursue; and to retain the moral temper which has shown itself essential as the means to those ends; and we have the germ of all man's highest spiritual development. Train that; prove that; educate that; test and prove and purify that; and all will be done. Higher and higher will the self-control rise; more and more perfect will become the discipline by which the man will devote himself to the good of the state, to the spiritual welfare of his fellow-citizens. The excess and the greed will all drop off and disappear. The qualities of the perfect soldier will rise and be transfigured, under the pressure of a well-ordered life, into the noblest manifestation of man's moral character; into the self-sacrificing statesman, who can afford to rule because he never, now, can seek his own in office; and that, again, into the self-sacrificing philosopher, whose whole passion is to be transformed into the likeness of that spiritual good which he worships.

So it all quietly happens, we hardly know how. As the Platonic state develops, we find that we have forgotten all about the aggressive luxury in which we started. War drops away out of our horizon. The state, as it yields itself more and more to the leadership and dominance of those who are its guardians, falls more and more into the disciplined temper, from out of which the promptings of greed have been purged.

The soldier-guardians against outside foes have become changed into police-guardians of peace within the city; again, as guardians of external social peace, they prove themselves guardians of the interior peace of the city within the soul; so, from police, they become an official aristocracy of virtue, a school of righteousness, a nursery of philosophic saints.

This old discussion is thrown into a form in the "Republic" which is, in some ways, curiously Greek, antique, remote. And yet there is much here which tells home upon us to-day, if we transpose it a little into its modern key. In the first place, Plato has brought out into emphatic prominence the vivid paradox with which we still find ourselves confronted as often as we face the problem of war. On the one side, as he said, so still, war belongs to everything that is worst in our nature. A war represents an utter breakdown of everything that can be properly called human. It is the declaration that all the bonds that knit society together are useless, are shattered; that all the efforts of civilization to build the city of man in equity and brotherhood and trust and goodness have been scattered into fragments, have gone to the winds. Society falls to pieces before our eyes. It abandons its work; it gives up the game. War is the confession of its impotence. Back it tumbles. Reasoning, law, arbitration, all the root-assumptions of social intercourse,—these have collapsed, have been found wanting. They go by the wall. We are reduced to the brutalities of a physical struggle. Like beasts, we fly at each other's throats.

And how incredibly brutal it all is! The passionate fury of the fight, how terrible its power! How it lays hold of us! Who dares, in cold blood, to bring before his imagination the horror of the battle-scene? No one can believe it as he really tries to think it out. The pictures of the illustrated papers in war-time, the brilliant descriptions of correspondents, these turn us sick at the first look; and then we get used to them—get used to them just because we cannot present such hideous cruelties to our imagination in real flesh and blood. As we read the wearisome repetitions of wounds and death, it becomes to us like some bad dream, some nightmare—it cannot be really happening. We do not believe it. I shall never forget how this incredibility of it all came upon me once, when I passed out of the door of a panorama of the battle of Wörth at Cologne—a panorama where everything was given, in terrific vigour, that could sicken and stun; where you positively felt the agony of the biting shells as they tore their way into the flesh, the crunching of the bones under the wheels of the artillery, the shrieks and yells of stricken men and terrified horses, the glare of relentless hate in the eyes of those who stabbed at wounded men on the ground—wounded men who, writhing in the pangs of death, had spent their last gasp of ebbing strength in a treacherous shot into the back of the foe. There it all was, a scene of fierce madness, in which men seemed to have drank of some hell-broth and become frenzied with the cruelty of fiends. Ah! to think that that should be the last sight of mother-earth which the memories of dying men should bear away with them

into the far world beyond death! To think of the souls, flung hot from this savage roar of rage straight into the eternal silence, straight before the awful judgment throne of God! And then outside, as you passed into the pleasant Cologne gardens, there sat in crowds the soldiers of Germany—the very men who had madened in that horrible fray—quietly taking their ease in the sun, subdued and gentle; men with friendly faces and kindly eyes, strolling under the trees, and watching the merry children dance and play, surrendered to the sweet homeliness of household peace. And, as you looked at them, it seemed absolutely impossible to put the two contrasted scenes together. There was nothing in these men to suggest that it was conceivable that they actually could have ever been hotly engaged in deeds so barbarous and so bloody; that within them somewhere lay latent the fires that could blaze out in such frenzied violence, in the lust of slaughter, in the reckless ferocity of killing and being killed.

Such is war in itself, as a visible fact. And all the concentrated skilfulness of science has but intensified this its horrid aspect of hate and cruelty and hideousness. As our nerves grow ever more sensitive, and our instruments of slaughter ever more heartless and excruciating and far-reaching and wholesale, the horror ever grows in intensity and in range.

And then, as we recognize this, there breaks in upon us the contrast which so surprised Plato. Somehow—who can deny it?—out of this debasing and intolerable carnage there rises before us a moral character which startles us by its beauty,—the character of the perfect

soldier. Whence has it sprung? What strange efficacy is there in this dark soil to breed such fair flowers? We can discern a reason, perhaps, for this steadiness of will, this trained and firm nerve, this disciplined obedience; but how has there been added to them this nobility of reserve, this delicacy of honour, this courteous deference, this quiet gentleness?

Even in its rougher forms, we cannot but recognize the value of the character built up under the training of the barracks. We see the rawest material which defies all other methods of education, taken up by this disciplinary system and endowed with the instincts of confederated honour, and with the brotherly heart that comes from responsibilities shared in common. This in the very roughest. And, in its finer examples, it touches the very heights of the spiritual life; it becomes typical of all that is most serene, and high-strung, and controlled, and tender; it can pass up to the very glories of Christian saintliness. We in England know this type well, for we have had it portrayed for us in its most captivating and exquisite ideality by the pen of Thackeray, in the pathetic figure of Colonel Newcome. And we have its entire secret faultlessly disclosed to us in the immortal lines of our highest master-poet, "On the Character of the Happy Warrior." He—

"Who, if he be called upon to face
Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined
Great issues, good or bad, for human kind,
Is happy as a lover, and attired
With sudden brightness like a man inspired,
And through the heat of conflict keeps the law,
In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw ;

Who, whether praise of him must walk the earth
For ever, and to noble deeds give birth,
Or he must go to dust without his fame,
And leave a dead, unprofitable name,
Finds comfort in himself and in His cause !
This is the Happy Warrior—this is he
Whom every man in arms should wish to be.”

There is the paradox ; and, in face of it, we must not shrink from the method of deliverance in which the bold insight of Plato anticipated, as in a dream, the reality of the Christian mode of redemption. We can only throw off the horror and wickedness of war by releasing, from out of this embroilment of blood, the moral qualities, the spiritual character, which have hitherto found their meaning and discipline under the conditions of war. Those qualities are too precious and rare for society to afford to lose them. They have on them the stamp of nobility—the ideal beauty that belongs to the high excellences of obedience, of restraint, of self-sacrifice. They keep alive in us the sense of causes and of creeds for which it is a light thing to lay down our lives. They sustain that moral fibre, that fine and nervous temperament, which wealth, and ease, and the weight of crowds, and the irresolution of infinite debate, and the tumult of wordy talk, are but too apt to disannul. We cannot spare these virtues—we, least of all, we English, who are so slack to recognize ideal motives, and so suspicious of all that is not practical and profitable. Yes ; the world is right in its dim consciousness that if, by abolishing war, it dropped these moral characteristics of the happy warrior, it would pay too high a price. It would be morally retrograding. This is why the poets, who are

our idealists, have so often disappointed us by the zeal with which they have sounded the trumpet for war as against industry, just because they have felt sorely the depressing conviction that an industrial era of peace meant too surely the dearth of those finer moral elements that have somehow, as yet, shone in their brightest and fairest through the smoke and heat of the battle.

Here, then, is our task, we who work for peace. We see how deep and serious it is. We have to plunge below the horrible surface of war; to seize and grasp tight these its spiritual powers; to detach them from their base entanglement; to disengage them and liberate them; to draw them up into a sweeter air, on to a clearer ground; so that they may find, in the life where the battle-flag is furled, a worthy field of exercise, an opportunity of noble growth. We have got to make human society aware that it can secure and retain and develop, under conditions of unbroken peace, all those precious qualities which now go to make the highest type of soldierly excellence. We shall never fully succeed in that object until we make it evident to the spiritual element in us that it does not need war in order to survive; that it can, without the ugly necessity of killing and being killed, still find vent for all that is in it of chivalry and of valour, for the heroism of self-devotion and for the splendour of courage. We must educate these very qualities themselves to shrink in disgust from the barbarism of battle, to hunger for an exercise that will be free from cruelty and hate. If the soldier-spirit itself once learned the

sensitiveness which would feel the moral hideousness of the scene in which it now has to display its gift, then we might hope to see the beginning of the end. Then, and then only, could we genuinely look for the day when the very implements with which we fight should be turned to happier uses; when the very temper out of which wars are bred should devote itself to the labours of peace; when the very "swords should be turned into ploughshares, and the spears into pruning-hooks."

I remember being deeply struck by an illustration of this truth, given in some words of Johnson, the noble-hearted missionary on Lake Nyassa, when, some years ago, he was pleading for a steamer, which at this moment is running up and down the waters of the lake, carrying peace and good will amid villagers that once never met except to fight. He showed us how the difficulty of ending the slave trade lay in this—that the slave caravan was at present the only outlet for energy, the one spot of active motion that ever shook the stagnation of the blind African land. Into it, therefore, poured all that was vigorous and alert; those who took no part in its vile work were those who had no craving to move and live and act. The material that went now to work the slave trade was the best stuff in Africa; and you could never make anything of your civilization there unless you could divert this excellent material into some new channel, where its energy would discover a fitter outlet than it could find in the old wickedness of enslaving. Therefore it was that he needed this steamer, in order that he might

offer a field for the spirit of active adventure, which might thus be drawn off and purified and redeemed.

My brethren, there is a simple illustration of the lesson which I have brought before you to-day. We must lift the civilized life of peace up to a level at which the chivalrous ardour of the moral spirit, longing for some high task to be given it, for which it may risk life and rescue honour, will be given its perfect freedom, its noblest hope. Surely it may be so! The opportunities are present with us. In the work of covering the waste lands of our vast colonies with ordered homes; in the wards of hospitals, where so much is offered to doctor and nurses that calls out the finest nerve, the steadfast resolution, the clearest self-sacrifice; in efforts spent in the task of winning to happiness and love the thousands who stagger down to degradation under the clouded misery of our foul and hideous slums;—in all these directions the way is open for high endeavour, for heroic devotion, without the stain of blood, without the curse of cruelty. Gordon found in the alleys of Woolwich work more congenial and more bracing than the long agony of the fight round Khartoum.

And, believe me, above all, in the service of Christ, we can find a pure and untainted scope for the kindling energies of the human spirit. Is this not, indeed, the reason for that repeated appeal to the military spirit which startles us in the Book of the Prince of Peace? We cannot but recognize, to our vehement surprise perhaps, how full charged is the Christian gospel with the symbolism of the camp. The soldier is its

constant ideal. Our Lord Himself delights to hold aloft His characteristic temper of disciplined obedience. St. Paul has the metaphor for ever on his lips. St. John, the Apostle of love, has picture after picture of this high war, in front of which goes the Word of God, with the sword that flashes from His mouth, riding forth, before His white armies, "conquering and to conquer." Why is all this, but that Christianity, true to its deep principle of redemption from within, and not from without, proposes to drain off from its present dreadful service of blood all that is noble and pure in the soldier's temper. "Come," it cries to him; "do not be afraid to follow me. I can talk your language; I can interpret your temper; I can offer you all that your better self seeks under yon dark cloud of war. You wish to retain your high-spirited nerve, your fiery courage, your chivalrous zeal, your radiant readiness to suffer and to die? Follow me, and you shall keep them all. Fear not! nothing shall be lost. Here is a victory to be won which will task all your resolution. Here is a better, a heavenly country to be saved, for which it is well worth while to endure pain and hunger, wounds and death. Here is a banner flung to the winds, round which brave hearts may rally for the rescue of the oppressed, for the defence of the weak, for the hope of the brotherhood. Come! pour out here your energy; let loose your courage; fight for the good cause; ride behind Him, your King, Who flies the blood-red flag of martyrdom; Who wars to the very death against all that is cruel and unclean. Follow Him, and you will

need all your nerve. Only you will, in this warfare of the Cross, never once lose your love of men, yea, even of your enemies. You will hate sin, but never the sinner; you will kill the evil, but save the guilty one. You will fight in meekness and in gentleness; these will be your weapons, which will make your right arm more terrible to those it smites than ever it could be made by sword and spear."

This is how Christianity would redeem war. It would lay hold of the soldier spirit, and lift it, and purge it, and transfigure it, until it has carried it up on to a level at which it would become an inconceivable thing to it that it should go out to kill a fellow-man.

Alas, my brothers! is it because our Christianity is so shrunk, and mean, and comfortable, and unheroic, that we have so miserably failed in our endeavours to make war cease? Is it because there is so little about it that can appeal to the soldier qualities, so little that can venture to talk this high brave language of the Book of the Revelation?

Let us ask ourselves, What is there in us which can dare to sing the song that tells of a Son of God Who

" . . . goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar:
Who follows in His train?"

Is it not because there is so little of the splendour of self-sacrifice in our following of Christ, so little striving even unto blood, that the fiery forces of human hearts still seek their outlet through the dreadful gates of war?

Do not let us disguise from ourselves the scale and seriousness of the work before us. Right and good it is for us to do our utmost in the negative work of limiting war by every means in our power. Right and good to impress on men the horror and wickedness of which war is the embodiment and the cause. Right and good to labour to reduce all possible excuses for war; to remove and minimize all practicable causes of discord; to enforce every conceivable remedy in preference to war; to extend, by strenuous and patient effort, the area that can be covered by arbitration and conference and international law.¹ Such efforts may yet, under God's guiding Spirit, do much more than has been hitherto attempted.

But still, here in God's house, we will remember the full scope of the final task by which alone men will cease to hurt and destroy in all God's holy mountain—the positive task of bringing in within the action of Christ's redemptive grace all that now finds its only field of exercise amid the barbarism of battle. Christ, our King, alone can conquer the forces of war, just because He alone can venture to assimilate those forces, and turn them to His own purer service. But, to do this, we must ourselves give Him free way and full passage, that He may be enabled to display Himself before men in His highest energy, in His most sacrificial ardour. We must cease to obscure His shining glory; we must let Him be seen through and in us as One Who, indeed, goes forth to this war, and

¹ Preached at St. Paul's Cathedral in presence of delegates from the Conference on International Peace and Arbitration.

Who calls to Himself the soldier heart that He may baptize it in His own blood, and make it gentle and tender as a little child. It is not we who shall do this great thing, but He in us. He, and He alone, by the fires of His strong furnace, can so work upon this stubborn metal of ours, that "our swords shall indeed be beaten into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning-hooks, and nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

SERMON XVIII.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.—1.

“Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”—ST. MATT. v. 17.

THE Sermon on the Mount adopts very largely the national and traditional form of the proverb. We know how ancient and familiar and favourite as a method of instruction this had ever been with the Jews. As David, the great king of their highest aspirations, had been the type and master of all their lyrical sacred songs, so Solomon, the good king of all their wisdom and wealth, had become the type and master of their literature of proverbs.

Now, we know what a proverb is. The proverb is the vivid concentration, in a single concrete picture, of a whole body of practical experiences. In a single emphatic instance it sums up a general law. It conveys a moral generalization under the guise of a direct practical precept. Its real essence is an abstract principle; it asserts a moral law, but, instead of making its assertion in the form of a general proposition, which is always cold and repellant and hollow, it throws it into the form of some intense and

vivid and significant illustration of its action, and so stamps it home not only upon the reason, but upon the imagination and the heart, which can grasp the real and the concrete, while the abstract and the general sound to them vague and intangible.

This, then, is the advantage of the proverb—that it conveys the abstract under the form of the concrete. It conveys the general principle under the form of the practical example. But with this advantage, it also, of necessity, must have its danger. Its concrete practical appearance disguises the abstractness of the law which it embodies. The man who listens is captivated by the vivid picture given him; he lays hold of it fast; it sounds like a bit of real advice which he will find it as easy to follow as it is to remember. As a moral law, he would feel it very remote and empty, and difficult of practical application in detail. It would not sound as if it would be helpful or direct. It would cost much effort and strain to work it out into the multiplied variety of actual experience—that he sees. But a proverb looks as if it were going to save him all the trouble of working out its application. It tells him plainly what to do. It gives the result itself. He can walk off with it, and can understand exactly what it would direct him to do in a particular instance. Here the plain man, who wants a plain direction how to act, seems to have got just what he wants.

But, of course, the plain man is wrong as usual; all this apparent practicability is but an illusion. The proverb takes a vivid instance of the law merely

in order to emphasize and imprint most forcibly the law itself. It is the general law which it asserts under this symbolic type, and it never proposes in reality to relieve the listener of the trouble of discovering how to apply this law to facts. That trouble remains as great as ever it would have been if the precept had been given in the form of a general principle. The particular direction given in the proverb is of no practical value in itself, for the instance it adopts to illustrate its meaning will never really occur to any one in exactly that particular form again. Nor would the moral direction be of any use if we had to wait to apply it until the exact circumstances which it used as its illustration did actually happen to us. The proverb, "If a man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the left," would be as easy to obey as it would be idle and profitless to hold, if we had to postpone its observance until the prescribed scene actually took place. No; the plain man who thinks that a proverb escapes the perils of abstract generalization is beguiled by its outward shape. The concrete picture may serve to lodge, to root, the law firmly in his imagination—that is its proper purpose. But it must stop there. It cannot interpret itself, or apply itself, or give unmistakable directions that can be followed without trouble in the intricate cases which the practical life is for ever creating, any better than the most abstract general principle can. It throws upon the man's own conscience all the responsibility of detecting, and measuring, and examining, and defining the real application of the

principle to daily life. Every conceivable incident will occur to him, except, most probably, the particular incident adopted by the proverb; and it is he himself who must puzzle out how, in these varying incidents, the proverb can be translated into practical use. "If your enemy thirst, give him drink," is, in reality, exactly as general a precept as the broad, abstract law, "Love your enemies." Yet every one can see how difficult it is to know what action it is which the law, "Love your enemies," directs us to do; while it seems as if, in the proverbial form of it, there could at least be no doubt about that. The only difficulty, we think, would be in doing it; but what to do is plain enough. We are "to give him drink." But, in reality, what to do is as great a difficulty as ever it was under the form of "Love your enemies," for the proverb cannot mean that we are to confine our love for our enemy to giving him water; but if not, then what does it tell us to do? Well, we must find out for ourselves. The proverb won't tell us.

This fallacy into which the proverbial form of a moral maxim is to beguile our slothful attention was long ago the favourite trap into which Socrates loved to give his hearers a fall, in order to compel them to recognize the real universality of all ethical principles. The young men about him were accustomed to identify this or that principle with certain definite acts which some epigrammatic formula taken from the poets or the sages had prescribed as the typical acts in which the principle was displayed; and then Socrates would easily invent a possible case in which the particular

act prescribed clashed with the principle. And what then was to be done? Ah! that is just it. Socrates would never tell; he would vex his puzzled hearers by telling them that they must find out for themselves what was in each case the right thing to do. He could never spare them the trouble. They themselves must win more inward knowledge of the moral law itself; and then alone they would know, in each set of circumstances that might arise, how best to fulfil it.

It must be so. The proverb does but give spice to the law. It sums it up in brief; it puts it for us in a nutshell; it fixes it in laggard memories; it brings it before us in its most striking significance; it enables us to store it easily in our brains. But it still remains a law of action. The particular act it uses as its symbol may or may not ever occur; and the law is quite independent of its occurring. It might, under certain circumstances, dictate the exact reverse of the act so symbolically adopted. At any rate, its modes of real fulfilment might—nay, must—vary infinitely in outward expression. And no one will ever be able to anticipate beforehand what will be the exact act which its application to the ever-shifting circumstances of human life might demand. People who in this sense cling to what they call the *literal* meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, have wholly mistaken a proverb's nature; they have made it at once useless and absurd. They have robbed it of all moral weight, for they have tried to identify an inward moral temper with a particular outward form; and this is Pharisaism; this is the death of all morality.

The Sermon on the Mount, then, contains moral principles secreted mostly in proverbs. And these moral principles, what of them? In interpreting them there are two key-texts—one at the beginning of the especial part of the sermon which is devoted to ethical teaching on the moral character of Christ's citizens; and one at its close, summing it up. The first of these two is the one that I have taken as my text: "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Our Lord seems to fear that some who have been drawn into this new kingdom by the power of His pitiful compassion—the mourners who look for comfort, the hungry who have been promised satisfaction, the persecuted who are to win peace, the weak, the poor, the miserable, who are endowed with a new hope,—that these or others, who flew towards the sound of such good news of love, may be counting on finding a light and easy discipline, a slackened rule of moral service, a relief from austere demands and the burden of unflinching commandments. This new Teacher is full of mercy. He is gentle to sinners. He will ask little. He will loose, and not bind. So they may be dreaming, as they flock to that wonderful voice. And our Lord lifts a word of warning. Nay! no slackening of moral demands. Mercy, forgiveness, comfort, relief, indeed, for those who need the gift of healing, for the sick in such sad want of the Physician. But, in being healed, restored, made sound, they pass into a kingdom where the discipline will be yet stricter than before, inasmuch as the aim is higher and the task of fulfilment harder. In that kingdom into which pardon admits

them, the work of holiness, instituted under the older covenant, will be carried yet further. It is to enable those sick to endure the severe strain of this loftier demand, the strain of a healthy service—active, urgent, incessant—that the Physician is come to raise them from their impotence. Nothing is to be remitted,—no rule of purity, no necessity of righteousness. How can it be, when they are brought, by entering this kingdom, nearer to God, Who must be one of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? No! no slackening of the spiritual code is possible, is conceivable. To suppose this is to mistake all the meaning of mercy, all the purpose of pardon. Let no one make such a disastrous blunder. “Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”

It is impossible to say this with too strong an emphasis. More is to be asked of you, not less, than before. “Unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

“Not to destroy the Law or prophets, but to fulfil.” That is the key-note; and the six instances that follow are illustrative of this fulfilment. Six times our Lord takes up the commandments given “to them of old” under the Law, and in each He exhibits how

His new teaching stands to those earlier precepts. In each He is not undoing the old, but carrying it forward, going beyond it, asking of His citizens all that was there before, and more. He is not destroying the old, even when he puts it aside. He is transcending it. It is only put away because it has ceased to be adequate, in its earlier form, to the new and more perfect fulfilment.

This, then, is the character of the contrast between that which was said of old and that which He, the new Lawgiver, now says—between the “It was said” and the “But I say unto you.” And we are bound, therefore, whatever be our exact interpretation of our Lord’s commands, to retain this relationship. If we arrive at interpretations which make His teaching stand in opposition to the old, as two diverse orders embodying two contrasted conditions, we can be sure that we are somehow wrong. For by our Lord it certainly was intended that His precepts should not destroy the old Law—should not negative, or cancel, or disannul, or oppose it; but should only exceed it, extend it, transfigure it, develop, and fulfil it. He demanded all the righteousness of scribe and Pharisee—every jot or tittle of it. Not one iota of an old commandment was to be lost or broken. Only He demanded more also.

Here, then, is one text which must rule and cover all our interpretation, however difficult this may be in the later instances taken by our Lord. Even in passing from the old “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth” to new “Resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee

on the right cheek, turn to him the other also,"—even there the advance must represent, in some sense, not a disannulling, not a condemnation of the old, but a carrying forward, a fulfilment of it. And then, at the close of the six instances, another key-text is brought in to wind up the section: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father Which is in heaven is perfect." All the instructions given under the six heads turn on this one great rule—they bring to bear upon men's moral life the supreme model of the Father's character. As He is, so His children must be. That is why the new kingdom is so austere. Their spiritual Exemplar is nothing short of God Himself in His eternal Fatherhood. What He does they have to do, in their poor and scanty measure. And if so, then our interpretations of what is commanded us must always be consistent with the Father's known character. If, for instance, He is most certainly one Who, as we are told in the sermon, resists evil, then that which is commanded us in the precept, "Resist not evil," cannot be something totally inconsistent with all resistance to evil. For there is a Divine resistance to evil which we are bound to imitate and execute by the law of our obedience to this same Father Which is in heaven. If our love for our enemies is to be modelled on His Who sends rain and sun on unjust and just, then it cannot be such a love as cancels our imitation of Him Who casts all Christ's enemies under His feet. It may be difficult to define the consistency, but a consistency there must be; for both sides of this character do necessarily

coexist in harmony, in God the Father. He does not violate the law of love to His enemies in bringing them under Christ's footstool, nor the law that forbids resistance to evil in warring against the devil and his angels. And if He does not, then there is some way, we may be sure, by which we should share with Him in that war, and yet retain our likeness to Him in loving our enemies.

To examine and unravel this consistency in detail would need more time than we have at our disposal to-day. Let it suffice, then, for the moment, to assure ourselves that such a consistency there must be; and to return to that general relation of the old to the new law, which is expressed in my text, "Not to destroy, but to fulfil."

That older covenant is sometimes summed up under the broad title, "the law of justice," in order to bring out its contrast with the new covenant of peace, which is named "the law of love." But our text asserts that, valid as this contrast may be in its degree, nevertheless the law of justice is not "destroyed, but fulfilled," by the law of love. The two are not diverse in nature, or origin, or character, or aim. Love is the uttermost secret of all justice.

Justice, in this sense, is love on a lower plane. And this explains how that Old Testament receives its final interpretation in the Gospel of Christ. It moves towards this as its goal. Herein lies its justification. It is to be tested and proved by that which is its ultimate issue, which is Jesus Christ.

This is our triumphant answer in rebutting all

attacks on it for that in it which is rigid, harsh, cruel. Yes! we say, but this rigidity did not stand arrested; this law did not tend to foster a fixed spirit of cruelty. On the contrary, what actually was its effect? What did it evoke and encourage and develop? It tended steadily to disclose from within itself ever surer and more equitable tenderness. It worked away from its early harshness; it set moving a current that flowed with ever-gathering force in the direction of meekness and gentleness and forbearance. It educated and intensified a character which ever learned to estimate at a higher value the worth of individual life. It drew out all that is most pitiful; it bred a peculiar respect for the poor and the needy, for the orphan and the widow. The strict assertion of its Mosaic Law moved ever forward towards this humane appreciation of human character.

Thus the rigid "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth," was a declaration of even-handed and regulated justice, which more and more revealed the sanctity that shields and glorifies every human personality, irrespective of station, privilege, or work. It was a masterful evidence of its preciousness in the eyes of the High and the Holy, Whose eyes were in all the earth. It was a continual revelation of the undeviating authority of the love for each other that bound the Jewish brotherhood together, making them wholly equal in matters of right and of wrong. Life, human life, was so precious in every form of it, high or low, rich or poor, that no one could damage it with impunity. It was hedged around with sanctity; touch it

who dare, he will suffer for it; for he has outraged the bond of fraternity; he has wounded the flesh which he should reverence equally with his own. Therefore it is that he must pay "eye for eye, and tooth for tooth."

So it was that the fruit of love lay secreted within the flower of righteousness. Press the law of right to its conclusion, and more and more it will disclose itself as the necessity of love. Therefore it was that our Lord, when He unfolded His new edicts, saw them to be but the perfected realization of that which had been said to them of old. In stating these, He might be going beyond what the old law had required; but He was not reversing, or traversing, or annulling it. He was not offering an opposite set of commands, in competition with the earlier. He was not laying the lines of a kingdom utterly different in type and spirit from the old, so that all that had hitherto built up the lower layers of social life ceased and disappeared. No; the old led up to this, pointed this way. Its statutes and its ordinances were all suggestive of this. If they were displaced, it was only as the imperfect by the perfect; only because He exceeded their righteousness, because He transcended their limitations. But not one jot or tittle of them failed. And more than that—rather because of that—because of this inner intimacy of principle that knit the one to the other, therefore it was according to the measure of their loyalty to the older laws that men would understand His. The closer they had clung to the old, the better would they respond to the new. In proportion to the

fervour with which they had devoted themselves to the assertion of the law of justice, the higher would they reach in their interpretation of His own law of love. So our Lord spoke. "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

My brethren, these are strong and alarming words. The law of love, promulgated by our Lawgiver on the Mount of the Beatitudes, is a law which reveals itself to us out of the very heart-core of the law of justice. All justice leads up into it; justice, with its strict equity, with its awful impartiality, with its sword and scales—"eye for eye, tooth for tooth." This is the portal through which we enter into the secret of the Divine love. This law of justice is our earliest interpretation of what God's love means; it is our preparatory discipline. Without it we have no entry; without understanding it we cannot pass on and up. Everything turns on our first apprehension of this law in its relentless, and necessary, and noble, and calm authority. Our task is not to go aside from it, or try another way, but to pass right through it, to take it up with us as we go in. "Verily I say unto you, Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The law of justice receives its exaltation, its intensification, from the law of love. Love tips the sword of righteousness with flame. That is the lesson

that our Lord enforces upon us by the help of these vivid proverbs which startle us in the Sermon on the Mount. These proverbs pierce us as barbs added by love to the sharp arrows of justice. That is their true purpose. Not to direct particular acts; not to save us the trouble of discovering how to apply the moral law to varying circumstances; not to say, "If you do this or that, you are sure to be right;" not to identify a moral temper with a formal and external action of any kind. Against all such interpretations the fiery soul of St. Paul has gone out finally and for ever. "If I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." No, none of this! But they are meant to prick and sting and smite with a vehemence that the bare rehearsal of the general law can never attain; to sting and to smite by supplying an unflinching test by which we can measure and prove our loyalty to the law. They are tests, standards, proofs, instances, by which we can estimate the rigour of the law given us by Christ. That is how we ought to use them; not by empty and childish attempts to do exactly the thing they mention, but trying our own lives by their measure. And that is, we see, by the measure of a real, positive act. The proverb asks for more evidence than a wish or a resolution, such as is too apt to be all that the more general law wins from us. The mere law sounds so vague, we might lightly pass it by. "Love your enemies." Oh yes, we hope we do. But the proverb proves that the law requires of us direct actual results. What of them? If a man who has wronged us is in

need, have we gone out of our way to help him? Have we anything as direct and positive as that to which we can point?

Or, again, "Resist not evil." The standard of that is, that if a man wants more of us than he ought, we should be willing to give him even more than he asks. If he compels us to go one mile, we should, of our own free will, go with him twain. Well, do you ever actually try that plan? Can you manage anything like that? Can you quote anything parallel?

"Love your neighbour;" that is, be at his disposal, beyond all regards to the mere justice or equity of his requirements, in the spirit of one who gives because he is asked; who gives because he can, and for no other reason at all. "Give to him that asketh thee; and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away." There is the level at which the law, "Love your neighbour," is set. That enables us to push the question home. Is there anything you really do for your neighbour that comes up to that level? Is there anything you have ever done for somebody else out of sheer beneficence, in the absence of all claim upon you, apart from all question of likes or of dislikes, or of interest, or equity, or your own fancy, or your private wish, or any emotional motive or gratification? Is there ever anything of which you can say, "I did that in sheer obedience to the moral law, which obliges me to respond to my neighbour's need whether I choose to or not, whether it ought to fall upon me by right or not, simply on the ground

that where I can do good to any one, however uninteresting or unworthy he be, there for Christ's I ought"? What do I ever do of which that could be said? What instance of the law could I produce from my life which would correspond to the instance our Lord takes of "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away"?

"Do not commit adultery;" and by that our Lord means that if the right eye offends, we should pluck it out; if the right hand, we should cut it off. There is the standard measure; what can we show that comes up to that standard? What evidence have we to give that would tally with such rigid adherence to the law of purity as that? The proverb here absolutely defies literal imitation, just in order to emphasize its proper claim upon us, which is to offer a test by which to try ourselves. What measures have we taken against the perils of lapses which satisfy this test? What, indeed? Can we venture to plead anything? Ah! barbed arrows indeed, these shafts winged with proverbial wit that our Lord lets loose from His bow. These barbs sting and pierce. Surely we have lost none of their incisive force by taking them, not as directions how to act, but as epigrammatic figures to vivify the Law. We do not explain them away, surely, by allowing that their application to life must, of course, infinitely vary. We lose nothing of their rigour if we hold them there as tests, as standards of application, by aid of which we can make our self-examination honest and thorough; by aid of which we can learn indeed our miserable

impotence to obey the law of love—to exceed, in the sense our Lord requires of us, the righteousness of Pharisees and scribes; by aid of which we can learn how to turn, in confession and shame, to that good Physician, Who Himself alone can heal the wounds and sores which these, His barbed arrows, have inflicted upon us.

SERMON XIX.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT—II.

“Resist not evil.”—ST. MATT. v. 39.

“RESIST not evil,” yet “Resist the evil one, and he will flee from you.” “Resist not evil,” yet “put on the whole armour of God,” “take the shield of faith,” “take the helmet of salvation,” “take the sword of the Spirit.” “For ye wrestle against principalities and powers. . . . Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” What is all this? Are there two minds here? Is Christ at variance with His Apostles? Does His method of encountering evil differ from theirs? Is the temper that He advocates the reverse of that which they praise?

Let us look a little closer. “Resist not evil.” But that must mean evil that is outside you, evil that cannot get an entry within you—that cannot master, or possess, or occupy, or spoil you. Since all such evil as this you must resist to the very death. You are pledged to this, both as children of God, and as citizens of the kingdom. For this means (1) that you hold your

lives from God Who gave them. You stand, therefore, pledged to preserve them for Him, pure, clean, untainted. And then (2), you hold them anew, as bought back for Him at the price of Christ's blood. Once again they are not your own; they are His, Whose goods you may not waste or damage. They are yours only in charge, in trust. Your one bounden and irrevocable duty is to give account to Him for their fruitful use.

Here, then, is the sphere of resistance to evil. Nothing can ever modify this plain obligation. Evil may never be allowed an entry within the life. Here the resistance must be absolute, unyielding, vehement, decisive. Nothing can justify its slackening; nothing can excuse a compromise. Here is no room for discussion, for parleying, for tolerance. No! Resist—fighting unto blood! “Take the whole armour of God.” Take everything—every weapon you can lay your hands on, every defence by which you can ensure resistance,—shield and breastplate, helmet, sword, spear. “Fight the good fight,” wrestle, endure, prevail.

Here, in this resolute resistance, lies the first necessity of life, whether human or divine. This is the secret of that resistance to evil which is the mark of God Himself. God could not be God if His resistance to evil was not absolute, unqualified, relentless. And this resistance of His it is which appears in the war which is in heaven, when Michael and his angels fight against the devil and his angels, and prevail and cast them out. This is the

resistance of which He is the Chieftain Who rides out on His white horse, with the sword going forth from His mouth, conquering and to conquer; "Who in righteousness doth judge and make war; Whose eyes are as a flame of fire; Whose vesture is dipped in blood; Who treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God; Whose Name is the Word of God, King of kings and Lord of lords." A tremendous, an awful picture, of the resistance of evil which He Himself carries out Who sat on the hill and gave the word, "Resist not evil." God, in that war, repudiates and extrudes the evil which has penetrated within His own heaven and has touched His own Divine responsibility. He must clear His Name from all that has obscured and clouded it. And this He must do, not out of vengeance, not out of mere anger, not out of selfishness, not out of pride, but simply and solely out of the inherent energy of personal responsibility, which, at all costs, must preserve its vitality, and therefore must expel, repudiate, reject, destroy, everything that would lower that vitality or corrupt that personal life. Holiness, which is God's innermost law of life, cannot be what it is and not set itself to uproot and cancel and beat down all evil. And that which we know as the Last Judgment is the great act by which God's personal self-responsibility effects this necessary and absolute expulsion of the evil whose neighbourhood, whose insertion within His domain, He can only afford, in His mercy, to tolerate now, just because that day of final repudiation is already decreed and foreseen. Far from His present tolerance,

by virtue of which He sends His rain on unjust as on just, and leaves the tares to grow among the wheat,—far from this being at variance with His final Judgment, far from its offering a plea or a suggestion that, at the last, that uttermost decision shall not be carried out, it is only possible because of that postponed day of separation. It is in anticipation of the final resistance to evil that God can contrive in a measure not to resist it now. That repudiation, that expulsion, are necessary to the present toleration, to the present acquiescence. The two modes of action, which look so opposite, belong to one another. His mercy now rests, for its base, on His justice hereafter. For the God Who has mercy must be a God Who wholly and utterly casts out evil from out of His own responsibility. There would be no God capable of mercy if He did not secure the purity of His own self-existence.

Justice, then, which is the repudiation and expulsion of evil from within, is the prime and unalterable necessity. Here is the sphere in which resistance to evil is our first law which nothing can annul. As with God, so with each soul that He has made in His image. And—let us be sure of it—it is not selfishness, not private self-regard, that comes into play as the motive that prompts us to acts of self-protection. And this for two reasons.

First, the ground taken is that our existence, as children of God, lays us under a responsibility to Him for the preservation of His image. We hold it in trust, and we are false to that trust if we let the enemy of God into any possession of it.

Our loyalty, our chivalry, our birth,—these are the motive-causes which enable us to throw into the very act of self-defence everything that is most unselfish and most sacrificial. The justice by which we demand for ourselves a right to expel from out of our life all that corrupts, encumbers, or defeats it, is itself the outcome of that love by which we dedicate ourselves, we surrender ourselves, to His absolute service and honour Who has made us for Himself, Who has bought us with a price.

And then, again, such acts of self-defence are not selfish, inasmuch as the assertion and the preservation of the self, in its freedom, in its essential vitality, is the primary condition of all unselfishness. We cannot be unselfish without possessing a self which can subdue and surrender itself. The act of self-sacrifice draws on all the powers of self in their highest form. Only by possessing those powers in their full force can the effort be made. According to the measure of the force of the self is the sublimity and purity of the sacrifice. Thus, every act of self-sacrifice is an appeal to the self to exert itself to its highest intensity. And no such act will be possible to a self that has admitted within its proper domain that which hurts, damages, weakens, paralyzes it. The self must be itself in possession of its endowments if it is ever to achieve its lofty task; only so will it stand the strain. This is why self-preservation lies at the root of the very law of love out of which sacrifice issues into act. This is why no soul can ever be asked to do evil for the sake of another's good—why, at all costs, it must

refuse such an act of sacrifice as would sully its life; for it would be ruining the very organ of sacrifice in lowering the level of its own life. Wherever it is right, as on some rare and momentous crisis it may be, to do that on another's behalf which seems to break a moral law, as when John Inglesant lies to save his king's honour at the cost of his own life which the truth would save, the justification must be sought in the plea that such a breach did not involve a moral lapse, did not lower the moral level of the soul's purity. The man can be asked to lose his earthly life for another, but never to lose his own soul—never to definitely arrest his own self-existence. For he is responsible for the preservation of the instrument through which alone permanent sacrifice can become possible.

Herein too, surely, lies the flaw which vitiates all those conceptions of self-annihilation, which hover about us under the vague fascination of the Buddha. They have all got tangled in the mazy snares of a theory which makes the essence of sacrifice to lie in the abolishment of the self. By such a theory, the highest moral act becomes an act of suicide; for in the destruction of the self it kills the root whence sacrifice springs; it cuts short all future opportunity of sacrifice; it makes sacrifice cease in the very act by which it reaches its consummation. This is the suicide of sacrifice. Sacrifice, if it is to be the law of life, must retain in existence that life which it evokes and crowns. It itself lapses if the self lapse. To secure its own continuance

it must assert the continuance of the self—the self which alone can minister as a priest at this high altar. To destroy the self is to rob the altar of priest and victim at once. Nay, the self must be in vigour to do sacrifice at all ; and the sacrifice itself, being, as it is, the highest exertion of self-activity, must yet further fortify that vigour, must brace it to new exertion, so that it is, by virtue of its own sacrificial deed, made yet more ready to repeat its service.

The self, then, is not in conflict with the law of love in demanding self-preservation, if it do so out of the sheer force of its inward responsibility, by which it is bound to keep the trust committed to it for the honour of God who gave it—for the service of man to whom it owes its sacrificial use. And is not this the justification of those Laws of Justice to which we make appeal in the building up of the society ? These Laws begin by asserting, according to their measure, the recognition by the community of the sanctity of each one of its component and individual members. They shield and guard, in proportion to their rightness, the free development, within the corporate body, of each living soul ; they clear for it its proper ground in which to grow ; they encompass it about with defensible rights ; they ward off from it villainous attacks, and the cruelties that stifle and slay. Yes ! But then, this does not imply that their entire benefit and aim is over in so setting free each individual life. It does not follow that justice is satisfied because each individual can do what he chooses without let or hindrance, so long as he keeps to himself and damages no other

life. This freeing of the individual life from peril and injustice was, no doubt, the Law's first duty, because it is the first condition of a noble and self-sacrificing life. But the Laws of a Society are still concerned with the fruit of good living which ought to issue from this individual freedom. They are still concerned in winning the harvest back, for the common good, of all the seeds thus carefully sown and watered. The individual must be freed, but it is for the sake of the better work he will do for the community. The right of the individual to the possession of his own free development must be asserted, but it is in the hope of, also, furthering and aiding the life of self-sacrifice in which alone that freedom can consummate itself.

True; it is much more obvious and easy and possible to secure, by way of direct legislation, the free exercise of the individual self against external burglarious attack than it is to insist on its willing self-sacrifice. This flower is more delicate than the root whence it springs, and the handling of Law is perilously rough for its sensitive beauty. The region in which positive legislation runs least risk of blunder is that of justice; and therefore it is apt to cling to this police function, which it fairly understands, and in the assertion of which lies its first obligation, rather than to venture out on the finer operations which are necessary if it undertakes to enforce, by Act of Parliament, the duties of love.

This is natural enough, and many may even think that Law had better confine itself, for fear of risk, to

this earlier and negative stage of securing the individual citizen against oppression or danger. But even so, even if it were possible—which it most certainly is not—for law to confine itself within these limits, still law would not rest on a different basis from morality. Still its protection of the individual would justify itself only as a preliminary step towards his voluntary usefulness to the whole body; still its assertion of justice on his behalf would look for its ultimate fruit in his self-surrender through the impelling power of love. It would have asserted justice, in order to make the free exercise of love possible. It would have secured the self by legal protection, in order that the self might go beyond the legal necessities, using them only as a vantage-ground from which it may start on its career of dedication, of social brotherhood.

Law, then, always aims at enabling men to go beyond its own obligations. This carries us back to our Lord's sermon, for this is just what our Lord demands of us; and He declares that in making this demand He does not traverse or annul law, but only complete it. He does "not destroy, but fulfil." He takes up the dictates of justice and declares them good. Only they are not the final position to be reached; they do not express the ultimate condition of the perfect moral temper. They are good, but they can be exceeded. The human will has done something when it has travelled up as far as is required of it by the calm, austere, impartial voice of equity. "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth." The absolute recognition of

personal equality in the eye of the law ; the indefeasible sanctity of the individual existence as such ; the shield thrown over each separate self—high or low, rich or poor—by divine justice ; the resolute resistance to all evil which tends to break down, or undermine, or ignore, or cancel the right of free, individual life—this comes first ; and this is something. Nay, this is much. It was so said “by them of old time,” under the express authority and sanction of God, the great just Judge of all the earth—God Who is no respecter of persons, Who holds the equal balance, Who will by no means clear the guilty, however strong, or rich, or violent. The human will advances, under this discipline, into the voluntary recognition of equal rights and equal duties ; into the free acknowledgment of the worth, in God’s eyes, of all human souls and bodies. Yes, so far so good. But yet your human will cannot arrest itself at this point, as if it had touched the moral goal. It has yet further to go—away and beyond what strict equity can require of it. It must yet exceed this type of righteousness. Jesus Christ will open out to you a moral ideal that goes higher than this. First you have got to learn the duty of resistance to all evil that would penetrate within ; and then, with this obligation apprehended, with the inner life thus secured and established, with the will thus upgrown and developed and purged and disciplined, with the inward conscience made strong against all inward peril, you are to look out abroad for a fresh task, for a new lesson—a task more God-like, a lesson that draws us far nearer to the innermost mind of our Father

Which is in heaven. Now you are ready, you are fit, for this nobler service. Now "resist not evil!" Now that you can afford the risk, now that you are too strong to give evil entry—now "resist it not!" This is the higher way. All the evil that attacks you, but cannot find a place in you; all the spite that hates but cannot hurt you; all the violence that threatens but cannot overpower you; all the sin that takes advantage of your good-heartedness to wring from you kind service; all the worldly wickedness that prowls about you to try and break down your temper, your patience, your forgiveness;—all this, that is powerless to damage you, against which you are inwardly secured, is that which you have now to win for God, to overcome, to tame, to appease, to master for Christ, to bring it under His footstool. And the way to win it, what is it? Why, the Divine way—not to resist it, but to yield to it; to do more in its behalf than ever it schemed to get out of you for its own benefit. It planned to force you to go a mile with it? Well, go with it twain. It thought to wring out of you some kindness; it thought to take advantage of your Christian friendliness, of your humility, of your charity? Well, your part is to surpass all its expectations, to outdo its hopes, to suffer far more for it, to take far more trouble for its good, than it had ventured so violently to claim. If it presume to trespass upon your time and patience, then spend more time and patience in serving its best interest. "If it take your coat, give it your cloak also." This is the way to win it over, to baffle it, to confuse it, to force it to succumb. Yield to it, and you

conquer. This is the way of Jesus Christ. This was His experience, and therefore this was His victory; and wherever this way is open, wherever the preservation of holiness does not forbid it, wherever the assertion of righteousness can afford it, wherever there is any hope of doing good by this road, wherever it does not conflict with the obligation of self-responsibility, wherever the laws of right and wrong permit it, wherever it is consistent with the necessities of eternal justice and with the moral welfare of mankind at large,—wherever, in short, it is possible, there the citizens of Christ's kingdom must be absolutely willing to tread the same path—willing to conquer evil, not by resisting it, but by surrender to its demands, by unlimited forgiveness, by inexhaustible concessions.

This is the ethical climax—the bettermost way. And, since this door has once been opened, since this vision has once been disclosed, since Christ set the standard, therefore it is never possible for the human conscience to satisfy itself that it has done all, when once it has met all the claims that can, in equity, be made upon it. That satisfaction was, perhaps, possible under the older covenant. The Jew who had done all that justice required, who had fulfilled all the necessary obligations, might rest content; but never the Christian. He has only half done when he has done this. He must yet be on the watch for the higher opportunities. He has yet to look round still, and ask, "What is there which I am not required to do, which is yet undone? Is there anything that I yet could do

on behalf of those who have no right to expect it—who have, indeed, forfeited all their claim upon me?” That is what we are bound to be asking. If such a case is brought before us, if the affairs of life throw it in our way, we cannot refuse to consider it; we may not say, “This deserves nothing from me; this has lost its right to call upon me.” If it is really true that we can succour or do good, then we may not protest that the claimant has wronged us already, or has hated us, or has been false, or base, or spiteful. These facts may throw doubt on the possibility of successfully relieving him, but they cannot be a Christian’s reasons against helping where it is clear that help is possible. Christ has for ever cancelled and barred this one reason against doing our best for a man—the reason that he has wronged us, that he is our enemy. Such a reason is not a reason at all. It does not count; it is forbidden us; it is not even to be discussed; it is blotted out. Christ does not know it. We must find another argument, if we are to justify ourselves at His bar, for doing nothing on that man’s behalf.

Dear brethren, we talk often of the impracticability of these counsels, of the impossibility of carrying life along in obedience to them. Yet there are more openings than we think, surely, in which we might put them in practice in a way that would make life move along with far greater smoothness and force. For, indeed, how life is encumbered with quarrels and hate! What a strange amount of unforgiveness we come across as we get behind scenes, inside families, or within social circles! What a surprising bitterness

of heart at wrongs done! How old grudges are nursed with dark and wearisome persistence! What blind, obstinate refusals to conciliate we encounter, even in those who in general are kind enough! How fast men and women cling to their rights! How rigidly they demand that others should do to them as they do unto others! This seems to them the final moral gospel. All life is to be a "give and take," they seem to fancy; and so long as they fulfil their half of the bargain they have done all that could possibly be asked of them. What more could we expect from them? they ask. Do we not all thoroughly know this kind of language? And do we not know well all the wounds, and sores, and heartburnings, and jealousies, and injuries that it has to account for? Oh, believe me, the maxim, "Resist not evil," is practical enough, is applicable enough! For it is just this sort of language which it absolutely bars. The life that pleads for itself on these grounds is below the level of Christ's demands. It has failed to understand what He meant when He said, "Resist not evil." Win it over by yielding to it. "If it take thy coat, give it thy cloak also."

Ah, perhaps if we were more loyal in resisting evil within, we should be more ready not to resist it without! The secret of our resistance to it when we ought to surrender, is that we have yielded where we ought to resist. The love that forgives and yields and submits, if it may by this way hope at all to win evil over, is a love that can spring from nothing except the root of inward justice—a justice that

austerely wars to the death against the inroad of evil ;
a justice that, with its own moral life, never surrenders,
never submits, never admits excuses, never forgives
itself, in the Spirit of Him Who saved others just
because He would not save Himself.

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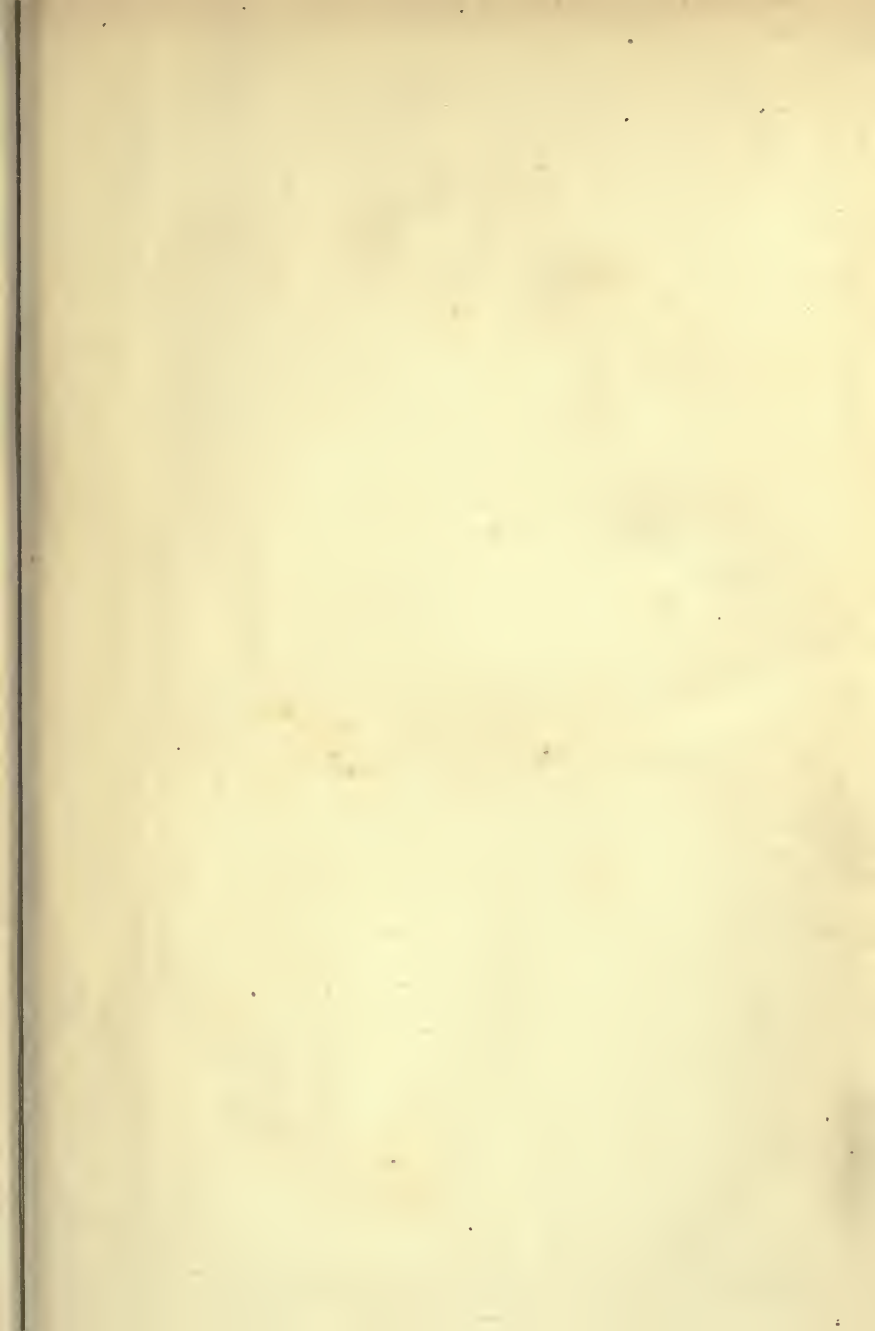
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